

Niagara Institute of Evangelism seeks to revive United Church's evangelistic heritage

Alan Doerksen

NIAGARA FALLS, Ont. — Three United Church ministers in the Niagara region recently formed the Niagara Institute of Evangelism in order to revitalize their denomination's evangelistic heritage and develop contemporary forms of evangelism. In late August the institute presented its second annual conference, which focused on the topic "Where's a Good Church?" About 100 clergy and lay leaders from United churches across Ontario, and some interested people from other churches participated.

Don Posterski, vice-president of national programs for World Vision Canada, was the conference's keynote speaker. In his role at World Vision, Posterski has done much research on

church and cultural trends in Canada, and this was reflected in his presentations. He addressed present trends in Canadian culture and pointed to how the church can reach out effectively to the "unchurched."

Good churches can be found in various denominations, says Posterski. "Across denominations, there are spotlights of Christian vitality." Churches today need to keep in mind three things, he says: "what's biblical; what's culturally sensitive; what's organizationally compatible."

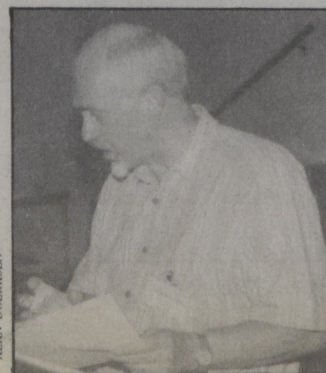
No longer at the centre

In order to be culturally sensitive, Posterski says he keeps "the Bible in one hand and computer print-outs in the other." To be organizationally compatible,

United Church members need to discover "what fits with the United Church way for people who have a heart for God. If you try to create something that is not compatible, you can be pushed to the edges and be on the outside looking in."

Canadian society today is full of ambiguity, says Posterski. For instance, 85 per cent of Canadians identify themselves as either Catholic or Protestant but only 25 per cent attend church regularly. However, Canadians in general expect the church to help with rites of passage, such as birth, marriage and death.

Canadians have shared agreements on some issues, but these have changed since the 1950s, says Posterski. In the '50s, "the church was more at the centre of



Don Posterski

society," but that is no longer true today, so "we have to think about doing church differently."

Although some people compare today's Canadian church to the early New Testament church, Posterski pointed out the differences. The early church "was

born like a small seed. It started small and increasingly it became influential."

But the reverse has happened in Canada, Posterski notes. Early in Canada's history, the state and church were allies, but this is no longer the case. "The church has lost its keystone in the arch of culture, but no institution has taken its place."

Focus on passive theists

Looking at statistics, Posterski noted that 13 per cent of Canadians claim to have no religious affiliation. But of these people, 26 per cent say the Bible is the inspired Word of God, 36 per cent feel God is the source and sustainer of everything, and 32 per cent say "as far as I am concerned, I am a Christian."

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Biblical worldview theatre seeks new metaphors for visual generation



PHOTO: COURTESY THEATRE & COMPANY

Elizabeth Giles, Linda G. Bush and Luke Kirby appear as three generations in *Bordertown Cafe* (Sept. 1995).

Bert Witvoet

KITCHENER, Ont. — Artistic director Stuart Scadron-Wattles waxes passionate when he talks about the biblical worldview theatre he founded and directs in downtown Kitchener. Within a sausage's throw of the town's farmers' market, he leans back in his chair and presses the point that there's no such thing

as a Christian play, just in case this reporter were a rabid fundamentalist looking for a message of salvation in his company's repertoire. "There are only plays written by Christians."

The group, which goes by the uninspiring name Theatre & Company, employs 10 people on

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News

Theatre & Company helps revitalize Kitchener

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a more or less full-time basis, and is in its seventh year of production. The billing for the upcoming season shows five

blocks away the company rents the Water Street Theatre, which is part of a busy downtown mall.

In a very real sense the company is benefiting from an



Kate Holt and David Van Belle in the Queen Street office

plays: *Sitting on Paradise*, *Angel Street*, *Wandering Star*, *Uncle Vanya* and *The Case of the Curious Cabaret*. The five plays run consecutively from September through May.

A suitable area

Assistant director David Van Belle explains how Scadron-Wattles and his wife Linda Bush came from upstate New York in 1988 and how they felt that the Kitchener-Waterloo area was a good place to establish a theatre that would operate from a biblical worldview.

First of all, there was no professional theatre here in a region that serves 500,000 people in a 30 kilometer radius. Secondly, there are three universities nearby. Finally, there is a strong religious community in the area made up mostly of Mennonite and Lutheran believers.

That Mennonite and Lutheran presence also explains why there was no theatre here, says Van Belle, who joined the company last year after he graduated with an MA in drama from the University of Guelph. "With German people music is big."

Part of revitalization

The company rents two spaces, explains Kate Holt, who is in charge of publicity, photography and a host of other functions (she won't touch acting). One space is a third-floor office and rehearsal room near King and Queen Streets, which is in the heart of Kitchener. A few

economic downturn in the core of the city, as rents are low and vacancies high. "Downtown is slowly dying," says Van Belle. "People welcome us here because they want this to be a healthy area. Lately there are signs of revitalization."

Theatre & Company is part of that revitalization. It drew over 6,000 people last year, which was an improvement of 2,000 over the year before. Last year it also had 400 subscribers, compared to 200 the year before. Besides box office income, the company receives grants and sponsorships from a variety of sources. The staff is responsible for raising part of their own support budget, and over all, a staff member's average income is below \$15,000 a year.

Doing good to the audience

Much of the core support comes from people who share the company's vision of cultural transformation. Theatre & Company tries to reach that goal by producing plays written by both Christians and non-Christians. So how does it achieve the cultural transformation it wants with a play not written by a Christian?

According to Scadron-Wattles, a playwright does not have to be consciously writing from a biblical perspective to have one. He attributes that possibility to the power of God's creational law, but also to the fact that the gospel has permeated Western thought, although he finds that

to be true less and less today.

He and his fellow members look for plays that "do good to their audience" and that connect with "what they dream at night, with what makes them sick when they read the papers."

Another consideration is whether using a certain playwright's material reflects "who we are and who we are becoming" as disciples of Christ.

For practical reasons a small company like Theatre & Company avoids plays that require many actors and elaborate special effects. And, of course, the choice of play has very much to do with the strengths of the company.

Lex appeal

Part of the attraction for subscribers is that the company will often invite a lecturer to comment on an aspect of the play. When a few years ago it put on *Dracula*, it had a local professor speak on the nature of evil.

Kate Holt recalls the tension that putting on *Dracula* created with some critics. Evangelical Christians thought the choice of play was inappropriate for moral reasons, though, had they watched the play, they would have seen a version that was truer to Bram Stoker's book than popular sensationalized versions are. Secular critics did not like the fact that Theatre & Company did not dwell on the erotic part of *Dracula*.

Stuart Scadron-Wattles believes that the play without the lecture will still serve the purpose of cultural transformation. "We never add something to a play," he says. "We seek the truth in the play and bring it out to the best of our ability."

Power of language

One of the main aims of Theatre & Company is to reintroduce people to the power of language and metaphor, says Scadron-Wattles. "There is something very important going on in our society," he adds. "We have moved from a text-based society to a visual society. Research shows that children have a hard time moving their eyes from left to right as they read a page. College-aged students are having a hard time making rational connections."

To work against these trends requires a cultural community with commonly held metaphors, thinks Scadron-Wattles. By put-

ting on plays that challenge society's "humiliation of the word" (a phrase used by Jacques Ellul), the company hopes to create a climate in which the Holy Spirit can work. When a good play's the thing, truth becomes incarnational.

Much of the deadening of language can be witnessed even in the way Christians talk, according to Scadron-Wattles. When evangelicals use church jargon ("Are you saved, brother? I just want to thank you, Lord.") they are doing what techno-babble is doing in the work place.

Scadron-Wattles also believes that the house and box office staff help create community with the caring way they serve the public. People have commented how they are treated as family, and how it makes them

feel human. He considers this simple form of hospitality a revolutionary act in a culture in which everyone is a number or a consumer.

To nourish each other spiritually and emotionally, the staff holds monthly ensemble time and an annual retreat. "But we can't be the church to each other," says Scadron-Wattles. "We're primarily an artistic community."

He explains that they no longer pray before rehearsals and performances because not all the people working with them are Christians. But because the company is always "in some kind of crisis" they do pray a fair bit. And at ensemble time they always take communion, led by different members of the group.

Living between two worlds

Stuart Scadron-Wattles was born of a Dutch Jewish father, a Dr. Scadron, a fierce agnostic. When he died, his non-Jewish mother married a Mr. Wattles, an Episcopalian (Anglican). This explains how Stuart, raised as an Episcopalian, has always felt that he lived between two worlds.

It was in college that through a Campus Crusade for Christ worker he consciously

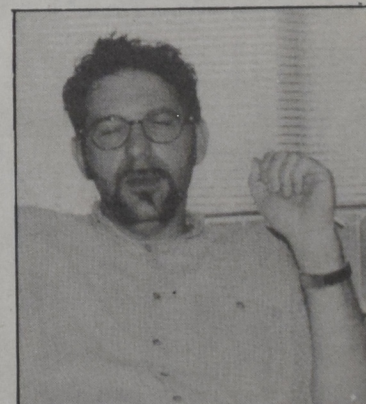
accepted Jesus as his Savior. He then learned and began to appreciate that at the heart of the gospel is the teaching of the Kingdom of God. He realized that Christ did not preach the church but the Kingdom. Later on he would read and agree with Brian Walsh and Richard Middleton's book *A Transforming Vision*.

Another influence in his life was his godfather, Oscar Hammerstein II, another

Jew and the well-known composer of many a musical. Three years in Vienna brought Stuart into daily contact with the German, French and Italian languages.

Back in the States, he attended theatre school and ended up producing theatre near Ithaca, New York, for 10 years. Stuart is the founding artistic director of Theatre & Company in the Kitchener-Waterloo area.

There are only four other biblical worldview theatres in Canada, says David Van Belle: Rosebud in southern Alberta, Chemainus on Vancouver Island, Brookstone in Toronto and Pacific in Vancouver.



Stuart Scadron-Wattles reflects on the purpose of Theatre & Company

News

Toronto church ordains first female CRC pastor

Alan Doerksen

TORONTO — In late August, Ruth Hofman, who has worked with Toronto's First Christian Reformed Church for the past three years, became the first woman to be ordained to the ministry in the CRC in North America.

Hofman began her work at the Toronto church in June 1993 and has worked as the church's pastor except for one thing: she hasn't been able to administer the sacraments of baptism and communion. Describing her job before ordination, Hofman says, "It's worked to a great degree [but] it was increasingly difficult because of the pastoral nature of the work." For instance, there was a time recently when five couples had babies within a short time. Hofman was not able to baptize them, which bothers her.

In order to administer baptisms and communion, the Toronto church asked ordained people connected with the church to help out. Most recently, Dirk Evans, a chaplain at St. Michael's Hospital, has been helping out this way, as did pre-



Ruth Hofman at her ordination

viously Dr. Adrian Helleman, who now works with his wife for a mission in Russia.

Hofman has focused mostly on preaching and pastoral care in her work at the church. She was able to perform marriages before being ordained because she has a license to marry from the Ontario government and marriage is not a sacrament in Reformed churches.

Becoming the first ordained woman in the CRC is "an honor in many ways," says Hofman. "I thank God for his leading in my life. I do want to take the honor with great humility. I attribute all the praise to him." But she adds, "I come at it with a bit of fear and trembling."

Felt called

Hofman first started thinking seriously about ordained church ministry when she was studying at Calvin Seminary. "I dared to risk thinking about it and naming the call to pastoral ministry," she comments. Hofman felt a call from God and also received affirmation of her pastoral gifts from friends and colleagues. "In the church setting, some of my colleagues were very encouraging."

Hofman could finally be ordained this year after Synod 1996, which met in June, affirmed a previous decision to allow individual classes to ordain women within those classes. She would not have been granted a classical interview or examination if Synod hadn't accepted her candidacy and of-

fered an interview, she says. "We didn't skip any links in the chain."

The steps

There were several steps Hofman needed to take to become a CRC pastor. First of all, in her final year of seminary she needed to receive a recommendation from the faculty in order to apply as a ministerial candidate. "I had that recommendation when I finished seminary," says Hofman.

Next, Hofman needed to write sermons from an assigned text and meet with Calvin Seminary's board of trustees for an interview. That happened last May, and Hofman was then recommended to and approved by Synod 1996.

"When you're declared a candidate you're eligible for a call," explains Hofman. "When you accept a call, the classis you're going to must examine you." Classis Toronto agreed to examine her in July, shortly after Synod 1996. Hofman passed the examine and quickly moved on to the next step: ordination. Although First CRC in Toronto

had already called Hofman to be its pastor three years ago, the church went through the formality of reiterating the call this year, after synod.

First CRC has been very supportive of Hofman and comfortable with having a female pastor, she says. "When they first called me three years ago, the church studied the matter for a long time. I didn't have to convince anyone."

Hofman, 42, is married to Steve Venhuizen, who works at Toronto's Yonge Street Mission. She was born in the western U.S. and grew up in Grand Rapids, Mich. Her father, John Hofman, is a retired CRC pastor who has worked in churches across the U.S. and is currently doing interim pastoral work.

Before getting involved in church ministry, Hofman taught Christian elementary school for several years. She also spent 18 months in England doing spiritual direction work at Lee Abbey, a retreat and revitalization centre.

Hofman's service of ordination was held August 24 at First CRC, Toronto.

Orthodoxy, community and outreach essential to the church

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Posterski interpreted this to mean, "for whatever reason, they got fed up with the church. They are not anti-God.... Canadians are more passive theists than they are active atheists."

It is the "passive theists" who are the biggest mission field, Posterski emphasized. The best question to ask such people is, "What is your religious background?" They will probably respond by explaining, and then asking you the same question. "When you are genuinely interested in people's religious background, they are very often interested in yours," said Posterski.

Within the church, Christians have different levels of commitment, noted Posterski. About 20 per cent are committed participants, actively involved with their local church and committed to their denomination. "They are people who make more than just a worship commitment to church," he said. "They're the backbone of the church." Another group within the church are conditional participants, who may have

switched churches and have less commitment.

In general, Canadians are joining organizations less and are less committed to the idea of membership, said Posterski. Church-going used to be more acceptable but today it has a stigma in our society.

Religion privatized

More than 50 per cent of Canadians identify themselves as Christians but don't attend church and "would not come regularly if you gave them a frequent flyer card," said Posterski. Such people tend to privatize their religion and say "I don't need the church to be a good Christian."

"People are living their lives with a lot of veto votes," commented Posterski. "Truth is reduced more to a matter of personal opinion."

Rather than being discouraged by the dropping number of church-goers, Posterski looked at the situation in a positive way. "A strong 20 per cent are going to church on a regular basis. We're still present in society with large, significant

numbers, but we don't feel that way."

Loss of faith in relevance

There are four pillars on which the church should be built today: orthodoxy, community, outreach and relevance, said Posterski. "Orthodoxy is about right beliefs" and affirming historic assumptions about Christianity. Looking at orthodoxy issues in the United Church, Posterski found that: 91 per cent of United Church pastors and 94 per cent of laity believe Jesus is the divine Son of God, but only 7 per cent of pastors and 31 per cent of laity believe in a literal interpretation of the Bible. And 84 per cent of pastors and 50 per cent of laity would agree with the statement, "What is right or wrong is a matter of personal opinion."

Posterski also quoted some disturbing statistics about the church's role in Christians' day-to-day life. In the United Church, only 27 per cent of pastors and 18 per cent of laity believed the church has a significant role in living of life generally, and 44 per cent of

pastors and 11 per cent of laity believed it has an important role in performance at work.

On the topic of outreach, Posterski pointed out that most Canadians have a positive view of Jesus, saying he was a good man, a teacher, a prophet. Christians need to "invite them to believe something more — that he's there Saviour and Lord."

"Eight out of 10 people in Canadian society continue to say that Jesus is the divine Son of God." But although there is "good press" for Jesus, churches "take a beating," Posterski said.

Building community

Christians and churches need to be in touch with their communities, said Posterski. He gave the example of several American "mega-churches" that are "getting a hearing because they're tuned in to the audience." These churches are "seeker-friendly" and are "nurturing the heart more than the head." Community involves a sense of belonging, opportunity for involvement, an emphasis on family, building self-worth and meeting emotional needs,

Posterski said.

In many churches, small groups are helping to build up a sense of community. In mainline Protestant churches, 50 per cent of weekly attenders also are part of a small group, as are 56 per cent of conservative Christians. But Posterski cautioned, "small groups are for some people, not for everyone." Therefore, small groups should be offered as a choice but not as a requirement at church.

Regular church attendance is very important to Christians, Posterski emphasized. "There's fruit as a result of consistent involvement with God's people."

Other topics dealt with at the conference included healing, contemporary music and drama in the church, and prayer ministry. Leslie McSpadden, one organizer of the conference, was encouraged and said he sensed a bigger feeling of hope than in the greater United Church community. "There's some momentum. We really got rolling." A third conference will be held next summer, with a focus on spiritual gifts.

Editorial

Why Christian schools are such strange places

As schools open their doors all across the land to kids suffering from a slight case of summer-induced amnesia, teachers still have time to be a little philosophical about what it is they are trying to accomplish. Before they are entirely swallowed up by the daily routines of lesson preparation, class management, staff meeting and student evaluation, they may still want to seize the opportunity to stock their minds with ideals and goals for later activities. Teaching and learning are, after all, such intangible things that you constantly need to fortify yourself with reasons and justifications.

Christian teachers, especially, must periodically ask themselves a few questions or sort out some uneasy feelings about the strangeness of this operation called "Christian day school." If things are right, the school they teach in should have something in its character

that makes it look foolish, weak, lowly and despised (see 1 Corinthians). If these qualities are absent, the venture is lost before it has started. The Apostle Paul is very clear on that when he lists these adjectives to the Corinthians, reminding them that God uses the things *that are not* to nullify the things *that are*.

At the external level, many Christian schools qualify for this "zero status" out of necessity rather than choice: they tend to be small schools with small populations; facilities tend to be limited, as is the curriculum; and the pay is below public school standards. But do they also qualify internally? Is there a willingness on the part of the school to swim against the stream of pragmatism, consumerism and other social and political fashions? Do staff and students choose the path of gentleness, humility, kindness and vulnerability? Is the foolishness of the cross front and centre? Do teachers seek God's will in the curriculum rather than the will of the provincial education ministry if there is a conflict? Are problems met with the weapons of prayer and faith?

It's an ongoing struggle

Being students or teachers in a Christian school demands from all a willingness to be transformed from what they are in their sinful nature and through contamination from their social and cultural environment to being renewed in the mind by Kingdom rules and values. Being transformed is an ongoing struggle against the easier route of being conformed to the patterns of this world. In that sense, Christian education is never a ticket to Easy Street.

In that same sense, secular education is much simpler. (I'm not suggesting that teaching in the public school is easier than teaching in the Christian school, since a lack of consensus about basic rules and educational ideas brings its own problems.) But secular education doesn't concern itself with the tensions that have built up in a creation which was made good and which now has come under the perverting power of Satan. Nor does it worry about Christ's work to restore this fallen creation. Reality is taken as it is, and students are encouraged to fit into society as best as possible. The goal of public school education becomes adjustment and success.

Christian teachers, on the other hand, have to think each day about the tensions between a good creation and a fallen creation, between the world as we know it and the Kingdom as it is coming.

World and Kingdom in opposition

These three words — creation, world and Kingdom — are key words in the vocabulary of Christian teachers. But what do they actually mean in the classroom of a Christian school? Let me take the study of English language and

literature as example, since my own teaching background is in these subjects.

Students learn about grammar, rhyme, alliteration, metaphors and story features such as plot, theme and character. These are basically things grounded in creation, even though they have a cultural shape. God's creation makes an effective use of these elements possible. In fact, a good deal of study in any school is in the area of creation-grounded rules for human knowledge and expression. Do students catch that connection between God's underlying law structure and human culture?

The fall into sin has given shape and direction to much of human knowledge. Novels can have perverted characters and themes. The purpose and manner of studying language can be twisted so that the importance of words and the imagination as servants of truth and exhibitors of playful exploration is lost. Because of sin, students and teachers can be emotionally closed to poetry, for example.

The Kingdom of Christ brings the holy breath of true learning into the classroom by creating a non-competitive and stimulating atmosphere, by promoting justice and righteousness through writing and speaking, by judging and rejecting secular ways of thinking found in literature, by encouraging honest and God-honoring writing.

The fight between church and world

This is such an incomplete example that it makes me a little uncomfortable using it. But I felt it necessary to put at least a few strands of muscle on the skeleton of "creation, world and Kingdom." The point I would very much like to make is that there is tension and struggle in operating Christian schools. And the tension should always be between the world and God's rule.

Christian schools are prime weapons in the fight between the Kingdom and the world. We need to feel comfortable with the fact that these strange institutions will look foolish and weak in the eyes of the world and that there is a good measure of strategic opposition assumed in their very existence.

But we also want to see these institutions as agents of healing for the whole nation. In addition to being individual kernels of salt in the world, as a body we can flavor and preserve the world with a handful of salt. The most reassuring thing about being in this fight is that we know that our struggle is not against flesh-and-blood fellow Canadians with a secular bent, but against "the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 6:12).

Let's pray that our schools become more and more countercultural places as our society is becoming less and less obedient to creation laws and Kingdom rules. **BW**

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Letters

Stopped struggling after nine years

It is with great interest that I have read the various articles regarding homosexuality that have been printed in the *Christian Courier* over the past several weeks. I especially appreciated those pastors who spoke from experience regarding members of their congregations.

I had always been taught that homosexuality was a horrible sin and sadly been very judgmental of those who professed to be gay. It was not until I was open and dug deeply into God's Word and read Christians' accounts of their journeys that I could accept my own gayness. I had run for nine years, been prayed over, anointed, counselled, gone

through Anderson's "Seven Steps to Freedom in Christ," and cried out to God constantly to take my homosexuality away.

Believing in a God who always answers prayer, I couldn't understand why God wasn't answering mine, that is until I realized I wasn't listening. He was answering me, but His answer was "No." After nine years of struggle, I finally stopped long enough to listen to God and hear Him remind me that I am "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps. 139) and that includes the fact that I am a homosexual Christian — two things I was always taught were diametrically opposed.

It was a wonderful feeling to finally come to terms with my homosexuality and to be able to reconcile it with my Christianity. I knew I could never give up my intimate relationship with God, and once I realized that God wanted a relationship with me just as I was, I could come out of the closet and learn to love myself.

No, being gay is not what I had planned for my life, nor would I ever choose it — who would choose it? Like the majority of young men and women, I had always dreamed of my wedding day, holding my babies in my arms and living my life with my family happily ever after. God's plans for me however are different than mine and I'm learning slowly

to trust him in all things.

What the future holds, I'm not sure — I hope a monogamous relationship with a wonderful God-given partner and perhaps a ministry of helping other Christians accept their homosexuality and no longer be ashamed of it.

My prayer for the church is that it would be open to prayerfully re-examining God's Word and perhaps realizing it may have been wrong in its original interpretation.

Unfortunately because of my career I am unable to sign my name, but that does not mean I am ashamed of who God made me, for I am "fearfully and wonderfully made."

Name withheld.

Opinion

Of babies, bullets and bewilderment

Margaret Brouillette

I am not particularly fond of throwing up. Getting fat and losing sleep are not among my favorite pastimes. Swollen feet and varicose veins are hardly a fashion statement. But for me, it was all part of a package deal and I must have glowed with the wonder of it. It seems I knew something that millions of mothers around the world know, but which has eluded our lawmakers and scientific elite.

In fact, we are witnessing Olympic-class semantic gymnastics as lawyers try to explain to common mortals where babies come from.

It started with the infamous story of that little fighter, a baby born alive with a pellet in his head. Society is aghast. Somebody shot this baby before he was even born. How cruel. How shocking. How freakish. The mother (and I use the term loosely) is arrested and accused of attempted murder. Everything is clear so far. Enter the woman's lawyer. There has been no crime, he informs us. The victim was a non-person and is therefore no victim at all.

Taken to its logical conclusion

But those inhuman blobs of scientific dough continue to tug strangely at our hearts and make the news. There is the Native woman who, stoned on solvent-sniffing, is ordered into rehabilitation for the duration of her pregnancy. On what basis? That's where the confusion comes in, seeing as the so-called "fetus" has no legal rights.

Meanwhile, a woman in Britain decides that twins will take a toll on her budget so she asks for and obtains the abortion of one unborn "whatever." There is a public outcry amid too-late offers to adopt one or both babies or to support the woman and her children. One observer remarks that abortions are carried out every day without making the news, so what's the difference here? What's the big deal?

Nothing, if we fall for the rhetoric. But nobody really seems able to accept the non-person argument taken to its logical conclusion. We continue to pay thousands of dollars to treat pregnant women. We have developed very advanced medical means to operate on that little non-person. And nobody has ever tried to explain what miraculous transformation occurs as scientific matter passes the birth canal, gasps for air, and inhales humanness. Is it because deep down we know that the miracle happened long before?

It's obvious to some

My memories have not been tainted by all the confusion. It seems clear enough to me. I can still feel the anticipation as I sat in our little nursery looking at all the baby paraphernalia, rocking, singing, stroking my bulging stomach. I talked to my little one, I prayed for my little one, and when those tiny heels started sticking into my ribs, I pushed and prodded and played with my little one. I laughed and cried and trembled with awe at the images of the ultrasound. I listened eagerly to the little heart beat at every doctor's appointment. And I prepared siblings for the arrival, not the creation, of another best friend.

It is obvious to the world's "underdeveloped" populations. It has been obvious since Moses required punishment for anyone who harmed an unborn child. It is obvious to all women in their right minds who feel the movement of a miracle within. And it is best articulated not by the bewildered erudites but by a tell-it-like-it-is three-year-old: "Look, Mommy, that lady has a baby in her tummy."

Margaret Brouillette lives in Saint Luc, Quebec.

The Church is our mother

Rev. Bernard De Jonge has written a good series of articles ("Trouble in the Church," Aug. 9) but one has to take issue with his statement that "the church is not the mother of believers."

St. Paul writes (Gal. 4:26) that "Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all." What is this "Jerusalem above" which is our mother? According to Hebrews 12:22-23, it is the Church: "You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly of the church of the firstborn."

When the angel in John's vision says to him, "Come, and I will show you the

bride, the Lamb's wife" (Rev.21:9) he surely must mean the Church. And what does the angel show to John? Verse 10 says, "And he showed me the city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God." This is, then, none other than the Church. This is Paul's "Jerusalem above, which is the mother of us all."

Feminists try to make God both father and mother, but they are wrong. God is indeed our father; but he is not our mother — the church is. St. Cyprian was surely right when he said, "No one can have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his Mother."

Fred Austin,
Port Alberni, B.C.

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Feature

The church must reflect the world to come

Trouble in the church: Part 4

Bernard H. De Jonge

North of Toronto, near Midland, there is a unique village known as St. Marie Among the Hurons. It is a restored 17th century Jesuit mission colony, complete in every historical detail. It is a living museum, a sign and seal of the past, a sacrament of history, if you will.

I mention St. Marie Among the Hurons because I'm convinced that what this village is for the past, the church and congregation of Jesus Christ is for the future. The church embodies

that believing Christians are "a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (2 Cor. 5:17 RSV).

Believers are expressive of the world that *can be*. New Christians, in the words in the *Heidelberg Catechism* and *Belgic Confession*, bind themselves together in a community of believers and they are a foretaste of the New Earth. You are a sign and seal of the life that will be. (See also 1 Peter 2:9,11 and Titus 2:14.)

This is a vision of a people

in the church in various ways: The church is there to provide for you. It serves spiritual needs of a broken, individualistic world, but a world that is also affluent. The church and Christianity are a "growth industry." The church must "market" the gospel to meet the needs of a discerning public.

The result is that denominations and congregations are in an ungodly competition for membership. Pastors become administrators and CEOs and attend seminars on successful church management. Conferences and worship tell pastors and churches how to utilize media in niche marketing.

'Data' determines success, failure

The sacramental view is being submerged by this pragmatic view. One piece of evidence is this: the rush to measure churches as successes or failures on the basis of "hard data": on statistics such as the number of people in worship; on the number of converts made in a particular "campaign"; on the growth that occurred in the congregation over x number of years; on the cost of one's church building (or buildings), and the dollars raised.

I've read of "successful church money management" as demonstrated by an American church that in one single offering raised \$25 million. All of that money stayed within that church; none of it was used for overseas or local mercy or evangelism. Churches have become big businesses and are driven like businesses to "succeed."

In this urgency to project success, the church adjusts its message to accommodate a discriminating market. In such an atmosphere it is very difficult to discern the gospel's call for believers to be suffering servants in this age, or its call to take up our crosses and follow Jesus.

There are books written by Christians who say that God wants you to be rich. In the reality of a world that runs on money, churches decide they must be careful not to bite the hand that feeds them. The prophetic voice of the church then becomes diminished; and the church mirrors the world as it is, finding it difficult to call people to account for sinful lifestyles and decadent behaviors.

The submergence of Kingdom

vision is also evident in the diminished ability of the church and its members to distinguish the antitheses between the world it lives in and the world to which it looks forward; the inability to discern the spiritual conflict between this present evil age and the age to which the church is called.

In an earlier, less affluent age believers discerned that in the world as found outside the church there were attractions which were off-limits to Christians. In 1929, for example, the Christian Reformed Church asked its members to boycott Hollywood. What if we were to resume doing that, not because of what happens in theatres but because movies are expressive of the decadence, violence and degradation of our world?

Furthermore, Christians are

we discern that we and the church must reflect the world to come, not merely reflect the world as it is.

When I visited St. Marie Among the Hurons I came upon a blacksmith making nails for the colony. The man spoke to me of his work and events in the 17th century as if that time were the present. I thought, "I'm going to get this guy to come out of the 17th century." So as we talked along I suddenly asked him, "Do know what time of day it is?"

I expected him to instinctively look at his wrist. Instead, he calmly stepped out of his shop, looked at the sun and said, "Well, by the lay of the sun we have about six hours of daylight left. So I guess it's three or four in the afternoon." I was impressed.

"The vision of the church as a counter-cultural force has become submerged under the view that the church should accommodate to culture. This latter view misses the radicalness of a vivid other-worldliness."

making ethical and moral decisions less on principle than on the basis of what works. I refer to divorce, abortion, euthanasia, law suits, careers, choosing marriage partners, schools, entertainment and the like.

In this present day it is difficult to honor the line between what is acceptable and what is not. That earlier awareness of the spiritual conflict between the world and the church took root in the conviction that the world was a spiritual battleground into which the church must enter with caution.

Playground, not battleground

The world is no longer the battleground; it is a playground. There are attractions and delights taken even into the church itself, given new colors and formats, then accommodated to the life of the Body. So the vision of the church as a counter-cultural force has become submerged under the view that the church should accommodate to culture. This latter view misses the radicalness of a vivid other-worldliness.

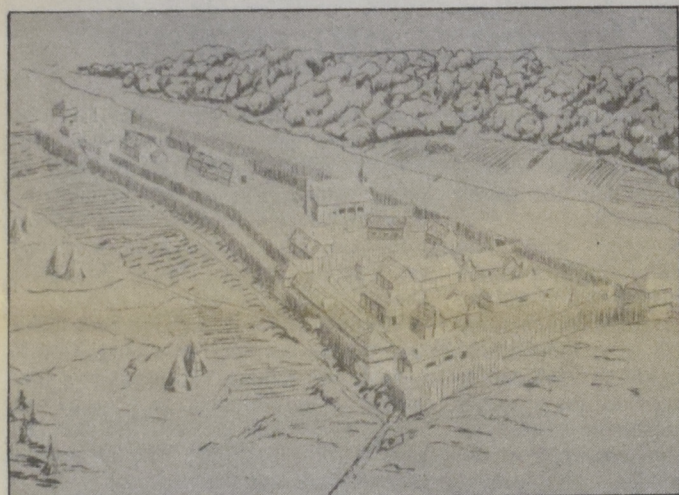
This is not a cry that we live in the past or retreat into exclusive communities like Hutterites or some Mennonites. Rather, it is an urgent cry that

Just as he "lived in" the 17th century and refused to be drawn into the 20th, my fervent dream is that when visitors come into the Kingdom "Epcot Center" and tempt us believers to revert to this world — to engage in a practice or speech or conduct of this age — we will refuse and will reflect the world to come.

The church is not the Kingdom itself, but a sign and seal of the Kingdom. As bread and wine convey the message of grace to believing Christians, so the church conveys the message of a world that is to come, a world caught up in the mind and heart of God.

Our mission is to make *that* world a reality. We must create institutions and organizations which manifest a redeemed world. The strength of the church and the honor of Christ her Lord will in no small way depend on her being a community of believers which lives out of a counter-cultural vision in the coming millennium.

Bernard de Jonge is pastor of the Ancaster (Ontario) Christian Reformed Church. He wishes to thank Judi Van Noort for her initial editing of this series and the members of his church for their feedback. He also wants to acknowledge his indebtedness to Father Bernard D. Green (New Oxford Review, Oct. 1993), whose seminal ideas have been a great help.



Drawing of St. Marie Among the Hurons

what life can become, as St. Marie Among the Hurons embodies what life was like. If this village is a living museum, the church and the congregation are an "Epcot Center" of the future, of the Kingdom of God, giving visitors who enter the church a glimpse of the Kingdom of God.

This last look at the church in this series examines two mind-sets that are so strongly antagonistic that one force causes the other to submerge under its weight and power, much as the submerged Pacific Plate off the coast of B.C. is being forced under the continental plate of the Rockies.

The first force I'll describe is the mind-set that says the church is a sacrament of the Kingdom of God, a sign and seal of the new world to come. The strength and energy of this vision flow from the visions dreamed by the prophets, and from our Lord himself in Scripture. Christ says in Revelation to St. John: "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev. 21:5 RSV). In Christ's resurrection we know

caught up in the work of God, empowered by the Spirit of Jesus Christ; people gifted with the work of the Holy Spirit; energized to create a body of prophetic witness in this present age, giving "life the shape of things to come" (from the CRC form for ordination of elders and deacons).

Life as it is

Hard up against this "sacramental" mind-set is another vision of the church, one created by North American pragmatism. This second view sees the church as a reflection of what life is here and now. It is based on a philosophy that asks the church to become "relevant," to "get with the program," to get contemporary. The church is not a holder of nor an icon of the world to come. Instead, it is to reflect the world as it is. (This pragmatic spiritual force also preoccupies other societal institutions. For example, the purpose of education now is to get you a job.)

This pragmatism reveals itself

ARTS & MEDIA



Deadly Waters

Deadly Waters founders in shallowness

Marian Van Til

By Christopher H. Meehan

Grand Rapids, Mich. : William B. Eerdmans, 1995. ISBN 0-8028-4068-X. Paper. 238 pp. \$8 (US).

In this first novel by Christopher Meehan, the murder mystery meets the Christian Reformed Church. It's an uneasy meeting.

Set in western Michigan, the Christian Reformed Church plays itself (more or less) and Calvin College and Seminary become "Redeemer" College and Seminary. (Meehan's knowledge of the CRC doesn't extend to knowing that there is an actual Redeemer College in the CRC world or he presumably would have chosen a different name.)

It is the characters here, though, not the institutions, that one wonders about: a minister, his one-time fiancée, the seminary president, a police officer/elder, a sheriff, doctor, lawyer, periodical editor and a popular church historian/seminary professor whose sudden disappearance off his boat in Lake Michigan is a mystery. They're CRC members all (the fiancée is ex-CRC and now ordained in

another church), but they're a disturbingly secular lot. And for good measure, there's a TV preacher who, in the narrator's (and presumably the author's) estimation is the slimy lizard of the group.

Secret lives unmasked

The minister, Calvin Truman Turkstra, narrates the story. Turkstra is asked by seminary president Bradley DeHorn to talk to a specific list of people about the disappearance of the professor, Sid Hammersma. The seminary cannot provide Hammersma's ill wife with money she needs from an insurance policy unless they're sure Hammersma is dead.

Naturally, when Turkstra starts poking around he finds that a lot of people, including DeHorn, seem to know a lot more than they're willing to talk about. He discovers that the charismatic, respected Hammersma was leading a double life, spending summer weekends on his boat in trysts with other men and boys — which DeHorn and several others knew about. He finds out that the TV preacher, Richard Rhodes, raped his secretary and was using the sheriff as a courier for pay-off money to keep her and her husband quiet. And the sheriff; well, he's a whole other chapter

in amorality.

Author Christopher Meehan is not Christian Reformed but became a close observer of the CRC while he was the religion reporter for the *Grand Rapids Press*. For an "outsider," he has a fairly good grasp of the peculiar spirit and attitudes that constitute being Christian Reformed. But not good enough.

Though the reader senses that Meehan is not out to skewer the CRC, and is, in fact, quite sympathetic to it, one would hope that he doesn't see these characters as being representative of the real-life Christian Reformed Church or of Reformed Christianity. His view, too, is blinkered by the fact that the only part of the CRC he knows is that in western Mich-

igan, which, while central to the church hierarchy, is hardly representative of its whole membership, their lifestyles and attitudes.

No spiritual maturity

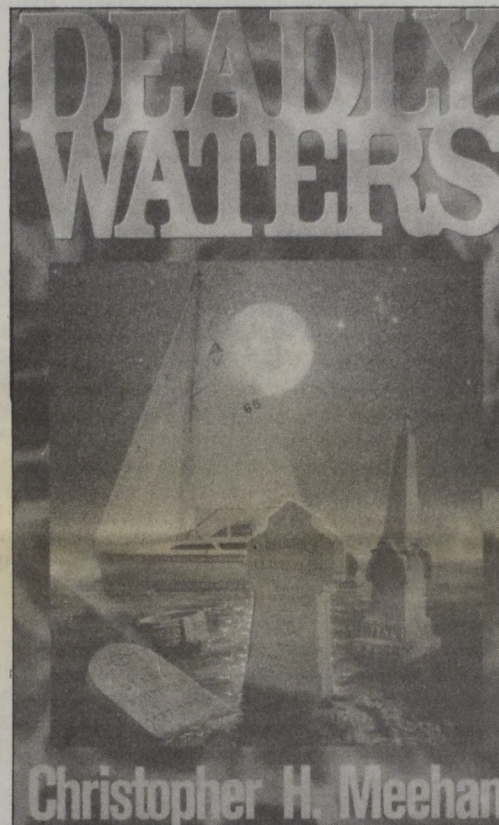
When it comes down to it, not

even Turkstra, with whom we're seemingly supposed to identify, is a very likable fellow. He's self-absorbed, far from spiritually mature and certainly not the kind of guy most people would trust as a pastor.

Turkstra's speculation about Hammersma is that he found out about Rhodes and was going to blow the whistle on him. But what about Hammersma's own double life? Turkstra tries to make Hammersma into an instrument of grace for the church while Rhodes is the big-time sinner.

If theologically the book has a problem, it is, after all, a novel (though a novel that intentionally comments on various attitudes of the CRC and its members, including on the church's "backward" view of homosexuality).

Meehan keeps you turning pages and writes in a succinct, even terse style appropriate to a mystery. However, once he hits on a descriptor he likes, he milks it for all it's worth. For example, he is forever having characters ball their hands into fists to indicate tension. And he seems to have a thing about pus and bug juice, which is a tad repulsive for a book that's basically an easy read for a day in the backyard or at the beach.



Kerpow! Cartoon missionaries bring Gospel to the funny pages

KONA, Hawaii (EP) — Tomorrow's missionaries are learning to conquer a new mission field — the comic page. A 12-week training course presented by Youth With A Mission is teaching budding cartoonists to present the gospel through cartoons. The course has drawn students from the U.S., India and Germany.

Through September, they will be studying character development, drawing and shading techniques, storyboarding and animation, to prepare them for evangelism through a medium that has traditionally been dominated by superheroes and animals. Visiting instructors include Matt Luhn, computer animator of the astronaut character Buzz Lightyear in the movie

"Toy Story," and Angela Costello, director of animation at the Christian Broadcasting Network.

"Cartooning is strategic since it can communicate successfully to all age groups and cultures because of the visual aspect," said school director Terry Hill, who points to the renewed interest in comic books in the West and their massive popularity in countries like the Philippines and Japan. "The humor of cartoons has the ability to get through your defenses, making a point while it makes you laugh, too. In the hands of talented Christians like Johnny Hart it can make a big impact — his 'B.C.' strip can give a panoramic sweep of the gospel in just four frames."

As well as appealing to young and old alike, cartoons can also reach many of the world's non-readers when words would be wasted, said Hill, who cites "Speedracer" and "Scooby Doo" as among his childhood favorite cartoon characters. "Medical workers often use cartoons to teach health care procedures in developing countries."

During the course, the students — who had to submit a portfolio of work to be accepted — have to create a new character and draw up plans for an animated film communicating biblical truths and values. Some students plan to draw evangelistic booklets for young people, and missions publications.

Traditional Canadian music played in classical style a bestseller

TORONTO (Canadian Scene) — The compositions of Johann Sebastian Bach have lent themselves to many renditions in a style other than that in which they were composed. One has only to call to mind the jazz interpretations of Bach by the Benny Goodman Orchestra, the Modern Jazz Quartet and pianist George Shearing. Other interpretations include those of the Swingle Singers and some African folk groups who together with French classical musicians recently recorded *Lambarena* as a tribute to both Bach and his great organist-interpreter, the humanitarian doctor, Albert Schweitzer.

Now comes *Bach Meets Cape Breton*, a new Canadian compact disc which became a classical music bestseller within weeks of its release. It is a fusion of Cape Breton folk music and the work of such classical composers as Bach, Purcell and Corelli, played on the violin, guitar and harpsichord by a talented trio of classically trained Canadian musicians: David Greenberg, Scott Macmillan and David Sandall. Their ensemble is named Puirt a Baroque, a Gaelic name for "tunes from the Baroque." The new compact disc offers music that spans three centuries.

Church

Wycliffe celebrates 100th birthday of its founder

HUNTINGTON BEACH, Calif. (EP) — It was a strange sort of birthday party — pie instead of cake and an honoree who's been dead for years. But for the 200 members of Wycliffe Bible Translators and their guests who gathered at Wycliffe headquarters to mark the 100th birthday of ministry founder William Cameron Townsend, it was a well-deserved celebration.

As a 19-year-old college

student Townsend attempted to sell Bibles in Guatemala. The young Townsend realized that the rural Guatemalans he was trying to sell Spanish Bibles to couldn't understand Spanish, and later returned to Guatemala to translate the New Testament into the Cakchiquel language. With this translated New Testament, a modern Bible translation movement was born — one that would focus on providing

Scripture for the minority peoples of the world.

When Townsend died on April 23, 1982, Billy Graham said, "No man in this century has given a greater vision for being used of God to advance the cause of Christian missions as Cameron Townsend."

Townsend's final charge before he died was, "Keep pressing on!" The ministry he founded has done just that.

Today Wycliffe works in over 50 countries and in 947 language groups. They have completed New Testaments in the languages of 30 million people and have ongoing translation projects for another 250 million people.

Powerful help to Natives

At the birthday celebration special guest speaker Dr. Ralph Winter, general director of the U.S. Center for World Missions, provided a moving history of Townsend's effect on what he called the "third and the final era of missions," the era of hidden and bypassed peoples from smaller ethnic groups. Speaking of the oppression of Native Americans, Winter said, "Probably no single person in history has had a greater contribution to the reversal of this awful aggression against tribal peoples than William Cameron Townsend."

Winter went on to say, "Townsend set himself to giving these least-regarded people his own most valued possession, and with God's help and one of the world's most remarkable set of followers, he has exalted tribal peoples more than any other man who ever lived."

Five Wycliffe leaders who knew "Uncle Cam" well each gave brief anecdotal reminders of the five basic principles Townsend championed: 1) Never set limits. Trust God to do the impossible. 2) Know your role. For Wycliffe that's linguistics. 3) Define your task. For Wycliffe that means give them the Bible. 4) Accept people as they are. Serve them, friend or foe. 5) Pioneer. Pioneer. Pioneer.

At the close of the program, cherry pie, a Townsend favorite, was served to all guests.

Cuban churches face increased opposition

SANTA ANA, Calif. (Compass) — The Cuban government's inconsistent treatment of churches and church leaders in this island nation of 10 million makes life for Cuba's Christians difficult and uncertain. As one Cuban pastor said, "I believe there cannot exist a person with a character so balanced as to be able to bear all of the daily pressures that Cuban Christians must endure."

Three imprisoned Cuban pastors have been released in 1996. Yet the closure of established churches and unofficial house churches continues. Church properties have been confiscated or destroyed. Dozens of Christian leaders have reported being interrogated or their lives being

threatened.

Open Doors reported that during June and July three churches from three different denominations were closed in the Alamar section of Havana. Each of the three churches supervised more than 10 house churches, which were also forced to close. A church of 80 members in the Electrico section of Havana was forced by authorities to destroy their own worship facility.

Repression and openness

In a June 28 press release, Voice of the Martyrs listed eight towns where churches had been closed or destroyed, many of which had been previously allowed to function officially by

the government.

In contrast, Cuba is in the midst of an openness by Cuban authorities that has allowed the importation of an historic amount of Bibles and Christian literature, Open Doors reported. And during July, an estimated 1,500 Baptist youths from all over the island gathered for worship and evangelism, with only minor hindrances. As a pastor explained, "The difficulties were overcome solely by the provision of God, because the support requested from the authorities in reference to food and transportation, that were controlled by them, on many occasions were not received."

Reformed Church in America rebukes minister for views

HOLLAND, Mich. (REC) — In its July 17 meeting, Classis Muskegon of the Reformed Church in America (RCA) formally rebuked one of its pastors for his unacceptable theology. The classis has been dealing with Rev. Richard Rhem and his 2,800-member church for several months. Rhem is charged with saying there was salvation outside of Christ as he is understood in the Christian tradition.

The controversy began when Rhem allowed a group of homosexuals to use his church, Christ Community Church. During questioning of Rhem earlier this year, his other views became known. In March, Classis Muskegon found that Rhem was outside the bounds of the RCA and decided that Christ Community, which strongly supported Rhem, should separate from the RCA.

Congregation angry at proposed heresy charge

The classis executive committee recommended to the July meeting, however, that Rhem not be released by the RCA, but that he be formally charged with heresy. This could have led to a rebuke and removal from the ministry. The classis was led, they believe, by remarks of the RCA general secretary, Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, who told the RCA's June synod that the church should not release congregations to independent status.

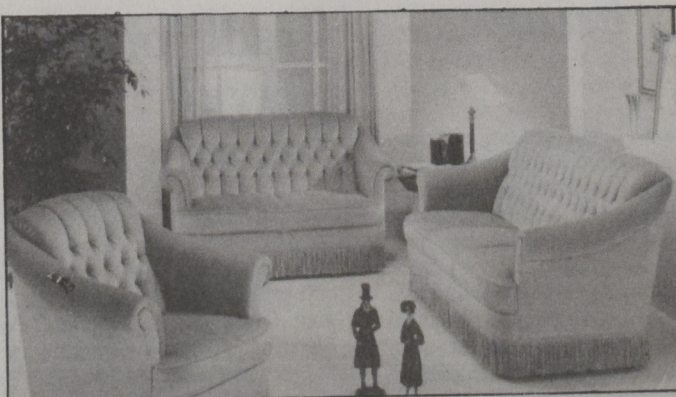
Once the executive's recommendation became known, Christ Community reacted angrily. On July 3 the board of trustees voted unanimously to secede from the RCA, effective July 4. That decision followed a congregational vote of 803-116 in favor of separating from the RCA.

Contrary to some of Granberg-Michaelson's advice, however, classis Muskegon added that Rhem would be allowed to "demit," that is, voluntarily resign, if the church would return to the table to negotiate a solution. The classis declared it did not recognize the July 3 action by Rhem's church, saying it violated RCA Church Order.

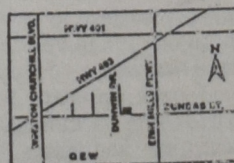
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Church

Bishops 'more Catholic than the Pope'?

MUNICH, Germany (EP) — Pope John Paul II planned to take a historic step to improve relations with Protestant churches during his summer visit to Germany, but those plans were thwarted by Germany's Roman Catholic bishops, according to a German news magazine.

According to *Focus* magazine, the Pope wanted to visit Wartburg Castle, where Luther translated the New Testament into German, and announce that he was cancelling Luther's excommunication from the Roman Catholic Church. This year is the 450th anniversary of the death of Martin Luther, who was excommunicated by the church in 1521 after refusing to retract teachings the church judged heretical.

The Pope's plans were dropped after strong objections by Germany's Catholic leaders. The magazine quoted an unnamed adviser to the German bishops as saying, "For God's sake, not in the Protestant stronghold of the Wartburg. Is the Pope becoming Protestant?"

The Pope has encountered similar opposition to his decision that the church should apologize for its past errors, including the violent nature of the Crusades, the persecution of sci-

entists such as Galileo, and its intolerance toward other faiths. According to the Catholic magazine, *Inside the Vatican*, published in Rome, some cardinals believe "it would be better to await the Last Judgment" before making any "confessions."

Purifying through repentance

In his official letter on the coming turn of the century, the Pope urged Catholics "to purify themselves, through repentance, of past errors and instances of infidelity, inconsistency, and slowness to act." He said that the Catholic church "asks forgiveness for the weakness of many of its sons and daughters, and for their acquiescence in violent and intolerant methods."

The Pope's apology was, *Inside the Vatican* commented, "the first time in the history of the church that such a solemn appeal for self-criticism, and such a clear insistence on making amends for past mistakes have been made by a reigning pope." Cardinals expressed their reservations at a 1994 meeting. "Let us concentrate on present failings rather than dredge up mistakes," the cardinals said, according to *Inside the Vatican*.

North Korean famine highlights Christian witness

HONG KONG (Compass) — Severe famine in the world's most atheistic state has ironically resulted in highlighting the witness of Christian families as they refuse to take the desperate remedies for physical survival now commonplace in the society.

According to sources in northern China, many North Korean couples have turned their elderly parents out of their homes, saying, "You are too old to feed, only the young should survive." Suicides of parents has apparently risen dramatically, but Christian families are marked by their refusal to embrace such a tactic.

North Korea has experienced severe famine since heavy rains in August 1995 wiped out the harvest, and more rain this July has jeopardized the harvest again. Among the population of

24 million there is believed to be a "hidden" church underground, organized around families. Said the source, "It is dangerous to witness in such a society, but with everyone being really desperate, even the most basic acts of clarity draw attention to you as a Christian."

Many people have been reduced to eating grass and tree bark to survive; law and order is breaking down, with executions reported for trapping small game. "In such a terrible environment," added the source, "anyone who refuses to sacrifice a family member, or even shares bread with a stranger, is regarded as unusual and people come round to ask that person why they won't do all they can to simply survive. They often carefully reply that being faithful to God is more important than being fed."

Chapter & Verse



Wayne Brouwer
Andrew Kuyvenhoven
★ Laura Smit
Al Wolters

Allowed to learn

"The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may sustain the weary with a word. Morning by morning he awakens — awakens my ear to listen as those who are taught" (Is.50:4).

Last year I gave up my job, sold my house and car, and moved to Boston, where I became a graduate student again after years of being a pastor and teacher. I felt that I had run out of things to say. I needed to learn again for awhile before I could go back to teaching.

Being a student for this past year has been a lot of fun. It's a very selfish life compared to the life of a pastor. There are few demands made on me other than that I receive the learning which is all around me. I am free to spend time reading and writing; I'm not obligated to attend meetings or even keep regular meal times; and I get to talk to lots of interesting people about ideas which stimulate and intrigue me. I always used to tell the kids in my church that their every-day life was my idea of a great vacation. Now I'm on that vacation, and it is wonderful.

Getting refuelled

One of the best things about being a student again is that I have regained my love of preaching. Since I am constantly receiving instruction, constantly reading great literature and profound thinkers, constantly talking with thoughtful people, I find that I have things to say. It is because I am learning that I am able to teach.

This was clearly Isaiah's experience as well. Immediately after affirming his vocation as a teacher he goes on to talk about his role as a learner. Listening to God every day is what makes it possible for him to teach meaningfully, to "sustain the weary" by what he teaches. In the next verse he says, "The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious."

Sometimes we do rebel against being taught. We think we know enough already, or at least we think we know more than the ones teaching. We do not acknowledge that God may speak to us through many and various people. We want to believe that we have authority and knowledge without submitting to the learning which fuels real authority and knowledge. We lack what John Calvin called a "teachable spirit." We are rebellious against learning.

A privilege to be embraced, pursued

But learning is a privilege to be embraced, not a slavery against which we should rebel. Isaiah was of a priestly family, privileged to learn so that he might someday teach. The coming of Christ shatters the barriers of tribe and family which limited the privilege of learning to a few Jewish men. Jesus takes time to teach women, Gentiles, slaves, even tax-collectors. All who come to him are welcome to learn.

Even in the new covenant it is necessary to learn before we may teach. Knowledge about God doesn't simply flow into us at our baptism. We need to seek learning, to pursue it, even long for it. We need teachable spirits which recognize both our need for learning and God's voice coming to us through the voices of our teachers. This is why Paul tells the women in Timothy's congregation that they are not yet ready to teach. They have not yet availed themselves of the privilege of learning.

Called to share the gospel

I realize that my current life of learning is a luxury which most people can not afford. I am profoundly grateful for the opportunity to give myself to learning so completely. The greater challenge is to continue to learn and listen while also sustaining others with the gift of the Good News.

We may not all be called to formal teaching posts, but we are all called to know the gospel well enough that we may share it. We are called to teach and to sustain the weary with the words we have received from God. This requires finding the balance Isaiah describes between receiving and giving, between learning and teaching.

Laura Smit is a pastor in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) who is currently studying philosophical aesthetics at Boston University, Boston, Mass.

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Feature

Sigmund Brouwer: Local boy makes good

Jessie Schut

Is it possible to write Christian fiction that doesn't have as its chief aim the delivery of the gospel message? Red Deer author Sigmund Brouwer believes it is, and his success seems to bear him out.

Brouwer was born in 1959 in Red Deer, Alberta to immigrant parents. His strong Reformed heritage, he believes, is part of the secret of his success.

"I feel guilty unless I'm really working hard," he says. "My dad, who is a mechanic, doesn't

building on the success of his stories, expanding them into full-length adventures. Within a month of submitting them to several Christian publishers, he had a contract to write a series. He hasn't looked back since.

His first series, "The Accidental Detectives," consists of 12 juvenile mysteries. The "Winds of Light" series includes seven historical fantasies for children. The "Dr. Drabble, Genius Inventor" series is for younger children and includes some paperback picture books. His latest efforts for children concentrate on sports: a "Lightning on Ice" mystery series about hockey, and the "Shortcuts" series which features extreme sports like snowboarding and scuba diving.

Branching out

In the last few years Brouwer has been branching out into adult fiction, with four Western mysteries ("Ghost Rider" series) and a historical fiction (*Magnus*) in paperback. The two latest books, *Double Helix* and *Blood Ties*, are his first hardback publications and his first offerings through Word publishers.

Unlike the characters in some other evangelical Christian novels, Brouwer's characters often struggle to define their religious beliefs and convictions. They are confronted with issues and conflicts that don't have easy solutions. The Bible is rarely quoted, and there are no dynamic conversion experiences; sex and violence even rear their heads occasionally.

Exploring questions Christians ask

Brouwer gets queries about the content of his books, especially since his novels often raise more problems and questions than give definite answers. He has a ready explanation for his critics.

"I'm always suspicious when people try to segregate Christianity from life," he says. "My dad's a mechanic, but people don't call him a Christian mechanic. I'm a writer who is a Christian. I don't segregate my faith from my work," he says.

"In my books I like to explore some of the questions Christians ask themselves. When you read about horrible things in this world you wonder where God is in all of this. How do we fit evil into what we also understand as God's love for us? These are dif-

ficult problems to resolve. I would be reluctant to say that I've resolved those questions. I prefer to think that I raise problems and questions. I'm not confident that the answers I arrive at are always the only ones that are true."

about 100 writing workshops a year for children, travelling across the country for interviews and contract negotiations, and still making time for his hobbies, golf and hockey. On weekends when he isn't travelling, he worships at his home

If you write to deliver a message, Brouwer believes, then you are no longer a storyteller, but a propagandist or a sermonizer, and that's a different kind of writing. He chooses to be a storyteller, believing that his beliefs will show up in his writing.

As a result, his characters, as *Library Journal* reviewer Henry Carrigan points out, "act out of the knowledge that there is some kind of absolute moral power against which one's actions are judged; the conflicts arise when they struggle to reconcile themselves and their actions to the declarations of this absolute moral law."

Not that his books are heavy reading — far from it. The novels are plot-driven, with lots of action, larger-than-life characters, suspense and a minimum of description. "We live in an MTV generation and I'm aware that books are different now than they were 50 years ago," he

church, New Life CRC, and spends Sunday afternoons with his extended family.

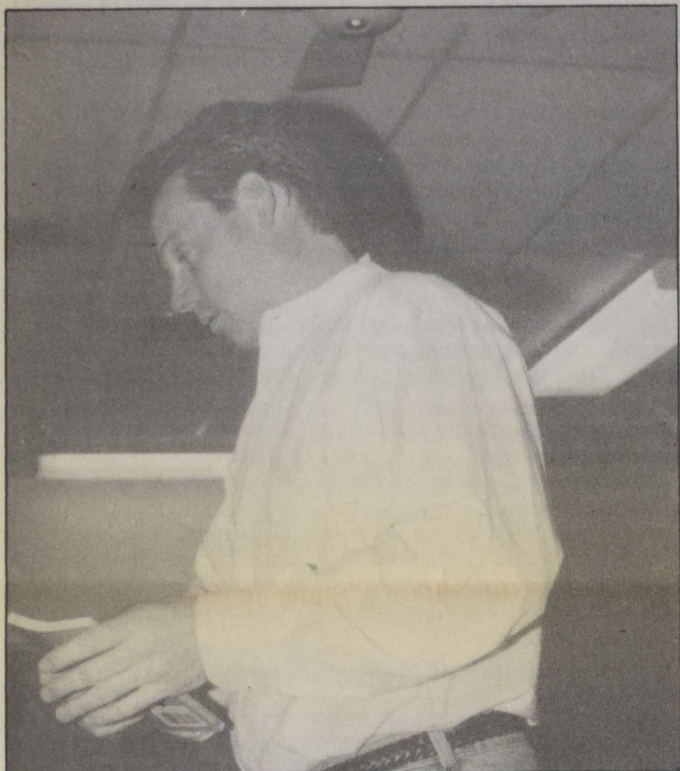
Always another deadline

Brouwer seems to have it made, both personally and professionally. His books appeal to a cross-over market, with his children's books now appearing in public schools through the Troll Book Club. The first book in his "Lightning on Ice" series, *Rebel Glory*, is already a Canadian best seller, with 6,000 copies sold through Christian book stores and 8,000 to the public schools.

But Brouwer isn't about to rest on his laurels. "It doesn't feel like I've got it made; it's always just one more deadline to meet, one more book to do, and after that there's another one. Maybe that's part of my Dutch Reformed background. I don't have to worry about my next meal, and even if I were well-enough off to retire, I wouldn't want to retire."

"This is my calling, but on the other hand, I wouldn't want to lock in and say this is what

I'm going to do for the rest of my life. When you do that, you're taking the mystery out of life. I guess you never know where God's going to be leading you next. But this is what I'm supposed to be doing right now, I'm quite sure of that."



JESSIE SCHUT

Sigmund Brouwer

Brouwer has made a name for himself in Christian publishing by writing mystery novels for children and adults. He has more than half a million books in print, and has been taken on by Christian publishing giant Word, with contracts that will keep him writing for the next year and a half.

But after publishing 34 books, he agrees with his hero, C.S. Lewis, who said there's no Christian way to boil an egg. He's quite sure that there's no Christian way to write a story, either.

Being true to your craft

"I think writers have to be true to their craft. Their job is to tell stories according to the rules of storytelling," he says.

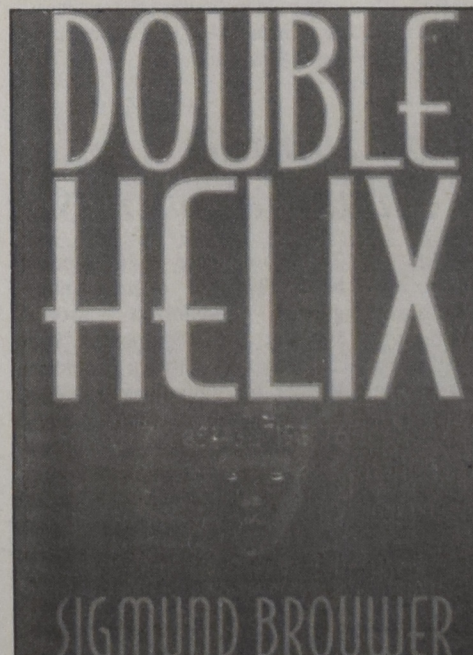
If you write to deliver a message, he believes, then you are no longer a storyteller, but a propagandist or a sermonizer, and that's a different kind of writing. He chooses to be a storyteller, believing that his faith and beliefs will show up in his writing.

wait to get inspired to fix cars. I don't have the luxury of waiting to be inspired, I just have to write every day."

His self-appointed quota is five pages a day, and as a result, in the six years since his first book, *Lost Beneath Manhattan*, appeared, he's written 33 more. Of those, 27 are for children; the rest are adult mysteries.

Brouwer has always enjoyed reading and writing, and when he left Red Deer to attend Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, he was encouraged by a professor there to keep at it. As a result, he attended Carleton University's School of Journalism after receiving his commerce degree from Calvin. A stint in Florida as editor of *National Racquetball* magazine honed his writing skills and his ability to meet deadlines. It was also at that time that he began publishing stories in *Crusader*, the official magazine of the Calvinist Cadet Corps.

He then decided to move back home to Red Deer, where most of his family still lives, and try



Brouwer and kids: *A great mix*



JESSIE SCHUT

Jessie Schut

Put author Sigmund Brouwer into a room full of kids and it's immediately obvious that you have a recipe for a great time.

Brouwer was in Edmonton earlier this year to conduct a young writer's institute for the kids at Mill Woods Christian school. It's one of almost 100 he does every year all across North America, reaching up to 10,000 kids in the process.

And the kids loved every minute of it.

Brouwer told them stories about the world's biggest slingshot that could shoot a watermelon over a barn roof. He told them about the time he thought he could pick on a smaller hockey player, only to discover that the butt end of a hockey stick can do a lot of damage to your solar plexus. He shared stories he's been told by professional hockey players about the pranks they play on each other on road trips.

The stories sent the children into gales of laughter, but the point Brouwer was making was pretty serious. He shared the stories, he told the children, so that they could learn to be better writers.

"You can use the things that happen to you in your stories," he told them, and showed how these same incidents, with some details changed, showed up in his books.

Trying to reach non-readers

Brouwer loves the interaction with the children, and in spite of his busy schedule he'll always try to find time to give workshops for kids.

"I try to reach kids who don't like to read. Reading is such an important skill, and once they discover it's lots of fun it can make a big difference in their

lives," he says. "I feel strongly that third to fifth grade children can be turned on to reading and writing, so I try to motivate these kids."

It works, too, as evidenced by the stack of testimonial letters he receives every day. For instance, Marie Anne McLean of Sweet Grass Elementary School wrote, "Thank you for a memorable afternoon. Your visit helps make reading and writing vibrant and personal. Our students think of you as a friend."

After his readings and storytelling, he invites children to ask him questions.

What's a Christian book?

"Are your books Christian books?" asks a young skeptic. Brouwer smiles, and before answering the question assures the parents at the back of the room that he's received an endorsement from Focus on the Family. Then he reads a short excerpt from one of his books in which a child wonders about death and decides he'd better be sure he's on the right track.

"My books don't always talk about Jesus as your Savior," he tells the children, "but they make you think about important things that Christians need to think about."

"How much money do you make?" asks a curious child, and Brouwer replies with a twinkle in his eye, "Not very much. I can barely afford to put gas in my Corvette."

Then he bends over towards the children and tells them, "I'm going to tell you how to become a successful author." The kids prick up their ears and sit up straighter. "It's easy," he says. "You become a good writer by writing ... and writing ... and writing. And then you write some more. I wrote stories for

seven years before my first one was published. I was too dumb to know they weren't good. The secret of my success is this: W-O-R-K!"

After the presentation, the kids gather around for autographs and a chance to purchase one of the books he carries with him to each session. As they

leave, they tell him they're going to go right home and write a story. And that, as far as Sigmund Brouwer is concerned, is what makes it all worthwhile.

Blood Ties is a fast-paced mystery

Blood Ties

by Sigmund Brouwer

Waco, Texas; Vancouver: Nelson/Word, 1996; hardcover, 304 pp.

Reviewed by Jessie Schut

The newspapers are full of stories detailing horrific crimes: child murders, arson, stalkings, serial killings, kidnappings. Readers of these news items may wonder what drives people to commit such crimes. They wonder if there's any way that people who commit such terrible deeds can ever be redeemed. They may also pray a silent prayer that such things will never happen to them and their loved ones.

In *Blood Ties* the reader will become involved in a mystery that involves all of the above crimes, with a liberal dose of lesser evil: fraud, larceny, embezzlement, beatings and threats, to name a few.

Brouwer wrote this book about a woman who is relentlessly stalked by a madman for over 20 years because he had a friend who was stalked for a time. It led him to thinking about what would motivate a person to do that, and about how a victim would feel.

"When you read about the horrible things that happen in this world, you wonder what it would be like for you and your family. You would be wondering where God was in all of this," he says. "The book was a way of exploring that theme."

Cinematic style keeps pace moving

Reviewers have described Brouwer's style as fast-paced, gripping and cinematic. This novel is no exception. Readers get involved almost immediately in a quest to detect which of the many men in the book could be the stalker of Kelsie McNeil, the only daughter of widower James McNeil.

From the time, at age 16, when Kelsie starts receiving

notes and a signature eagle feather from The Watcher, to the time she and her young son are kidnapped more than 20 years later, readers are left in suspense as to The Watcher's real identity. Italicized flashbacks provide clues, which finally make sense in the last chapter when his identity is revealed at last.

On the stalker's trail is Clay Garner, Kelsie's husband and a former FBI agent whose specialty was drawing up psychological profiles of serial killers. Now he's on the hunt for one that's threatening his own happiness. The perilous situation causes

Brouwer's succinct style will appeal to the reader who doesn't like lots of description and introspection but wants to see action.

see action. The people in this novel are not deeply warm, but they always act in character. Every chapter brings new developments, and the suspense builds to the end.

It is interesting to consider how Brouwer handles the question of redemption. Could a man who has killed, cheated, kidnapped and terrorized repeatedly ever turn over a new leaf? Brouwer suggests that possibility, and his instrument of grace is a little child. It's a biblical analogy which intrigues the reader with its contrast to the horror and evil that's been liberally depicted.

Short on character development

The book has down sides, too. One involves the characterization, which tends to be trite and obvious. The sheriff is a jowly, beer-swilling redneck; the native elder George Samson is a wise man of few words who has retreated from the world; and of course, Garner, Kelsie's husband, is smart, long-suffering, noble and determined. What else?

Sometimes, as well, the discussions about evil and God's presence in this world seem artificially placed, like the author is just looking for a place to interject his commentary. For instance, Clay accompanies his wife to church and observes the fidgeting, restless congregation; it sets him to wondering why such joyless worshippers bother to attend the service. It's the only time we get to see Garner in church, and the commentary doesn't develop the theme of the book. The question is valid enough, but not in this novel.

The book is available in hardcover at your local Christian bookstore; it may also be available in some Coles and Smith bookstores. And if you're too busy to read but like listening to cassettes on those long car trips to Grandma's, the book is available as well on audio cassettes.

Education

Create a positive attitude towards exploration of reality

A word for churches, parents and students

Ed Den Haan

Susan came to me asking for housing with a Christian family. Fortunately, the Guelph churches have a housing co-ordinator to help students with that. As we talked, however, other issues of concern to Susan arose. "I don't want a professor imposing his evolution stuff on me," said Susan. "I just don't believe in that." "My Dad warned me not to get into feminism," reported Susan. A little later in our conversation Susan asked, "How do you talk with Muslims and Jews on campus? Can I just ignore them? How do you relate with them? I see a Muslim listed under Campus Ministry. Do you work with them in Campus Ministry?"

This September we campus ministers once again expect to be asked all those questions and more. We enjoy helping students find their way with the Lord Jesus Christ about these questions of campus life. What we would like is a better partnership with home and church to prepare students for university life. We like the questions. We

developed love for the Lord and for his world to offset the fear of new knowledge and experience. Be ready to ask for help in areas too difficult to tackle on your own. If you need more help, campus ministers are eager to explore and seek God's truth with you. Just ask them.

Use faith to think through issues

When you want help with work in science to make sense out of your discovery, ask for it. Be ready to discuss your faith and understand how it relates. Parents, show your youth how to face real issues well; *think* them through in faith. Don't avoid the difficult issues, but pray about them and seek help to answer them. Create a positive, productive family and church spirit in which difficulty can be shared and explored, frustrations aired and pain healed. Such an open spirit invites the sharing of wisdom found in God's love. Such love for God excites a deep interest in life and its details.

Such love will also support innocent hunger for awe-inspir-

When you come as a student to a university have a well-developed love for the Lord and for his world to offset the fear of new knowledge and experience. Be ready to ask for help in areas too difficult to tackle on your own.

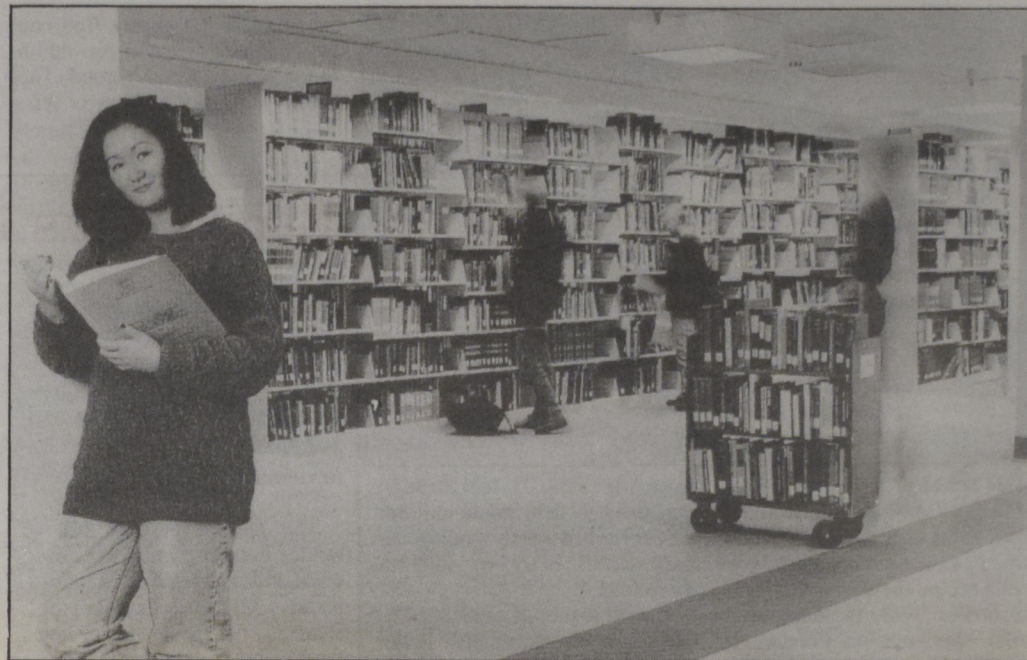
think parents and churches can help students ask *better* questions.

When you're interested in understanding the relationship of Christianity to other religions, read Daniel chapter 6 and Acts 17:16 - end with your students. Studying God's way in those passages will help to understand how we can mix with people of other religions. In church, preach on worship of our Triune God in Canada's pluralist setting. To witness well, develop lives of truth and beauty that make people of other religions envious.

As a student, learn to live by God's free grace instead of by competition for marks. When you come as a student to a university have a

ing surprises from God. Note well, however, that there are two kinds of innocence. Innocence in search of wonder is valid, it creates hunger and awe before God. On the other hand, innocence as commitment to laziness is destructive — Samson got killed that way. Explore God and his world so that your heart may find rest in him.

Do you want to be a witness of Christ? Wonderful, again your campus pastor and the Holy Spirit are already doing so on campus. Join them. A humble, forthright, open-book lifestyle is the best witness. Be ready to explain yourself in simple terms, out of a deeply rooted faith as God's creature, beloved by Christ. Repeat family stories of faith and tap



A humble, forthright open-book lifestyle is the best witness

the covenant root of life in Jesus Christ. Help each other see God's warm love and sound direction.

Know the Bible and how it applies to life. Read the Bible together to meet God, its author, and then, with your family, talk with God. Listen quietly. Sing God's praise. Open the pulpit to a celebration of God's wondrous meaning for life. Give your full mind and heart to the Lord to find better ways of walking with God in creation.

Let's go back, by imagination, to when Susan was at home. "Mom, I don't want a bath," said five-year-old Susan, enjoying her play outside. Mom responded "You can play for another half hour, then come in for a bath and bed. We need to wash the dirt off so you won't get sick. And your body needs sleep so you can have fun again tomorrow." Parenting, even in such simple ways, lays foundations for life and eventual higher education.

Ask good questions

Join these conversations with God in Christ. Help members disclose their life in God's presence and share your own life with them in that manner. That is the best "home schooling" for life.

Let's join Susan in catechism. "Why should I learn about the Trinity? It's beyond me anyway," she says. The class looks at the teacher, fully in sympathy with Susan. If you were the

teacher, how would you respond? Here's a suggestion: "Susan, imagine being able to love your brother all the time and do good things with him all the time. That's how God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit get along. That is what the Trinity is about, and what I would like you to learn with me from God. Will you help me by asking good questions as we go?"

Pay attention

Let's join Susan at university. As family, help her talk about the questions in her life, help her define them well. Where needed, help her make some good friends with whom she can make sense out of her educational experience. Pay more attention to her relationships than to her lecture material. Above all, let her lead you as parents into the areas of her concern.

As church, send her your weekly bulletin; send her address to the nearby church or campus minister and let Susan know that you are doing so. Create a refreshing congregational culture with sermons and discussion of life in the Lord. Employ God's gift of intellect well; don't ridicule it. If you are near an institution of higher learning, provide pastoral care and church family life to students. Learn about academic life and help shine the Bible's light on it. Create discussion groups for students after church and provide a dish of soup for them during that

time.

Students, we campus ministers need your help. Let us know where you are. If you don't want our personal contact we will respect that and not force ourselves upon you. Your dignity is important to us. We are, however, deeply committed by love for you and by our ordination vows to find ways of loving you.

We seek to grow with you in loving God. We promise you our prayers of support, whether or not you want our personal contact. May we offer you a buddy? We know students who want to befriend other students. If you would like such a friend, ask us. Look us up, please. We want to share the wonder of God's grace with you.

We need your help

We campus ministers need your parental, student and congregational help. We welcome the questions regarding faith from church and non-church youth, professors and everyone. We need your help to start the conversation about these questions. If you can come to university prepared for such a conversation you will be richly blessed. If you want to learn to carry such a conversation, we, your campus pastors, have the time, place and love for you ready to help us do so. Will you join us?

Ed Den Haan is the Christian Reformed Church's chaplain at the University of Guelph, Guelph, Ont.

Education/Sports

Kids have a certain logic... (Part 2)

Kids write some amazing things at school. Their mistakes often contain a certain pristine logic — and are hilarious because of it. Some elementary school teachers keep track of such gems. Another sampling culled from the Internet (see CC Aug. 30 for Part 1):

- ~ The word trousers is an uncommon noun because it is singular at the top and plural at the bottom.
- ~ Syntax is all the money collected at the church from sinners.
- ~ The blood circulates through the body by flowing down one leg and up the other.
- ~ In spring, the salmon swim upstream to spoon.
- ~ Iron was discovered because someone smelt it.
- ~ In the middle of the 18th century, all the morons moved to Utah.
- ~ Strategy is when you don't let the enemy know you are out of ammunition, but keep on firing.

- ~ Henry VIII, by his own efforts, increased the population by 40,000.
- ~ Queen Elizabeth I was a fat woman. The demands of the Spanish ambassador she stoutly refused.
- ~ He fought the battle of Worcester on the anniversary of his death.
- ~ The Pope declared Luther's writing to be hereditary.
- ~ What was the cause of the Industrial Revolution? People stopped reproducing by hand and started reproducing by machine.
- ~ The Civil War was started by Lincoln signing the Amasculation Proclamation.
- ~ The dinosaur became extinct after the flood because they were too big to get into the ark.
- ~ The triangle having the angle of 135 degrees is called an obscene triangle.
- ~ The stomach is a bowl-shaped cavity containing the organs of indigestion.
- ~ Mexico was conquered by Kotex.

AIDS activist to speak at Calvin College

Phil de Haan

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — Mary Fisher — the citizen AIDS activist who galvanized a U.S. national audience from the podium of the 1992 Republican National Convention and who spoke again at the recent 1996 Republican convention in San Diego — will speak at Calvin College on September 19.

The title of Fisher's talk is "The Day Compassion Died." She will reflect on how we express sympathy for AIDS victims through concrete measures of help. Fisher speaks from her personal experience — she contracted the HIV virus from her late husband.

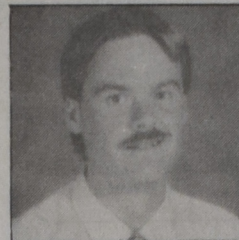
Her appearance at Calvin is being sponsored by the college's departments of biology and political science, the Calvin-Hope Department of Nursing, the Calvin Student Life Division and the Calvin Provost's Office.

Fisher was raised in Detroit and attended Cranbrook Academies, Wayne State University and the University of Michigan. The mother of two sons, Max

and Zack, Fisher is founder of and spokesperson for The Family AIDS Network, a national non-profit organization working to heighten community and national awareness and compassion in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Fisher also is an accomplished artist, best known for her work in handmade papers, who has been featured in solo and group exhibitions at major galleries across the country. She also has published collections of speeches and personal photographs — the royalties from those, as well as all honoraria for her appearances, are contributed to The Family AIDS Network.

What's the score?



Rob Janssens

more competitive than women when playing sports and surely are much more caught up in watching sports on TV or listening to games on the radio. (Personally, I think there's nothing like lying in bed on a summer night and scanning the AM dial in search of baseball broadcasts. I've picked up games from New York, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Boston, Atlanta, Chicago and Detroit.)

Advertisers know this, of course, and gear their ads to a mostly male market. Two words sum up their efforts to get us men to consume — beer and cars, not a very good combination. You've probably also noticed that these products have even made their way into the names of events. "Labatt Blue Jays Baseball" and "Molson Hockey Night in Canada" come to mind, while the Vancouver Canucks and Montreal Canadians play at "General Motors Place" and the "Molson Centre," respectively.

Without stereotyping, which is what advertisers must do all the time, these are two very "male" products we're talking about. The people that play, produce, broadcast, own, coach, manage, write about, administer and analyze sports are men, with hardly ever a female in the bunch. Quick, name five professional female athletes. In fact, name one! (Here's a hint. Think golf or tennis.) Professional hockey, basketball, football, soccer and baseball are (except in rare cases, so don't write your letters to the editor just yet) played by, and for, men.

Geared to female viewers

All of which makes the Olympics so different compared to every other major sporting event. While the percentage of women who watch the World Series or the Super Bowl is relatively small, CBC found that half of its Olympic audience was made up of women! NBC, too, had a huge female audience and geared much of its broadcast to what the network perceived women like. In the area of demographics, this is unheard of. But why? Why do female viewers find events like diving and gymnastics so fascinating, yet are repulsed by football and wrestling?

Obviously a key reason is the fact that, at least in Canada, the Olympic team was made up of more women than men. (This has less to do with the great strides women have made over the years than because Canadian men failed to qualify in sports like soccer, baseball and basketball, which would have inflated their numbers.) Women seem to want to watch other women. But if there were a professional football league for women, would they watch that too?

I doubt it. I've already alluded to the second reason. Some of the events just seem to be feminine in nature. Any sport that requires the characteristics of grace, refinement and elegance like diving, gymnastics and synchronized swimming, are likely to be enjoyed by women (much like figure skating in the Winter Games) and mocked by many men. NBC, which paid hundreds of millions of dollars to televise the Olympics sure knew the appeal of gymnastics. Remember Kerri Strug, the gymnast who hurt her leg while landing after a vault? It happened much earlier than it was shown on TV because the network knew many more people would be watching in the evening, especially women who have better things to do during the day.

CBC also geared its coverage for a female audience and it obviously worked. It featured absurdly long in-studio interviews with a host of Canadian athletes, even those who finished way out of the medals. As a guy, I say, "Who cares!" while women seem to eat this stuff up. To me, it wasn't the agony of defeat, it was the agony of hearing about it from athletes who we've never heard of before and never will again. Meanwhile, these syrupy sessions were done at the expense of showing more of the actual events like baseball and weightlifting.

Oh well. The Centennial Olympiad has come and gone, and if history continues to repeat itself, so have the female viewers. I guess I can put up with it every four years, though. Let's see, the NFL season has started, the World Cup of hockey continues and the World Series is only weeks away. I heartily encourage all women to tune in to these great events. Unfortunately I can't promise any sentimental interviews with Albert Belle or Claude Lemieux, though.

Rob Janssens teaches Grades 5 and 6 at Trinity Christian School in Burlington, Ont.



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Rev. Jacob Kuntz

Name calling

Under the title "A Christian by any other name," Bill Selles wrote an article in Reformed Perspective of May 1996 (Canadian Reformed) on the fact that there is so much "name-calling" in the Christian community. We quite easily label other Christians as liberal, conservative, traditionalist or un-Reformed. It is Selles' conviction that we should not approach each other with "a preconceived notion brought about by a label."

"Since we are of the same background for the most part, and the same culture, does that mean we should not have any disagreement, and that Paul's words [about reconciling Jews and Gentiles] do not apply to us?"

"I suppose the answer is obvious, in one sense. There are disputes among us. Among families there are different views on how to spend the Sunday. Between ministers, there are disputes about which translation of the Bible we should use. Therefore, we, too, have the difficult task of reconciling these ideas (and many others which could be mentioned), along with the people who are opposed to each other because of them.

"The problem is that the line is drawn in the wrong place. We have not identified an enemy but

a fellow soldier, wearing the same armor of God. In reality, where the battle is really fought, the person labelled is fighting for the same side. When the army is divided it is weakened. When we fight among ourselves we hurt the cause of Christ. It is not easy or helpful for discussion of issues when we approach each other with a preconceived notion brought about by a label.

"We should not address each other as 'liberal' or 'traditionalist,' 'conservative' or 'un-Reformed.' Often these labels are applied after [an] exchange of views on only one or two issues, after which the die is cast to never meet in open discussion. Instead, let's call each other by the only name that matters: Christian. As Christians, by any other name, we all belong to Christ."

Homosexuality

In The Presbyterian Record of July/August 1996 the editor, John Congram, wrote on the decision of his church's general assembly not to allow the ordination of a gay man who lived in an openly gay relationship. This issue apparently dominated the agenda of the 1996 General Assembly, and the decision (237 to 24) was widely publicized, also in the secular press.

"The vote was 237 to 24. I believe this reflects the feeling of our church. We are a church of conservative theology and liberal practice. The vast majority in our church believe the male-female relationship reflects God's creative purpose in the world and, therefore, should be given a primary role and set the standard for all other relationships. Homosexuality does not exhibit the same traits as heterosexuality and, therefore, does not conform to God's will in the same way.

"We must quickly add, however, that while homosexuality may be literally disobedient, it may, in some cases, more faithfully and practically express God's command to love. Heterosexuality, on the other hand, while being legally obedient, may display hatred, self-centredness and the misuse of power. Which becomes another way of saying we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God.

"Sin includes more than individual, wilful obedience. All of us are involved in sinful structures and conditions of life not of our own making. When we judge the behavior of others, we must also judge our own. As the moderator noted in her words of pastoral concern following the debate, 'All of us are broken.'

"Like many other denominations we have been engaged in an important and long overdue

debate and study on human sexuality. All of us have grown and learned in the process. The Report on Human Sexuality recognizes a process in which none has yet arrived. But, maybe now, when the church has spoken clearly on this issue, we could all benefit from a moratorium on a debate that has the potential to produce more heat than light.

"In the meantime, all of us can assist by refusing to treat this issue as one that defines us as church. In the first century, the primary issue was 'Jesus is Lord.' It remains the same today. All Christians can affirm and celebrate this together."

In the June 14 issue of the Mennonite Brethren Herald we found the opinion of Dr. John Redekop ("The urgent homosexual agenda"), who says that "we are kidding ourselves if we think that pressures on our churches and especially on young people are not increasing markedly." He gives examples of the growing influence of the homosexual issue and shows how, also in the Mennonite community, some people are beginning to question the traditional stance against homosexual relationships. We quote the second part of this article:

"Some truths that should guide us:

** There is no single cause of homosexual orientation. Numer-*

ous studies have conclusively shown that sometimes homosexual behavior develops in prisons and other unnatural settings. Sometimes homosexual orientation has parental roots. Sometimes it seems to be innate. There seem to be additional explanations.

"Some homosexuals change. Some homosexuals and their families don't like to acknowledge this truth, but it remains truth nevertheless.

"Homosexuals are tax-paying people and are entitled to a long list of rights and privileges. If all wrongdoers were denied civil rights, very few people would enjoy any civil rights.

"The biblical teachings cannot be explained away. It is far beyond credibility to try to demonstrate that the numerous Old and New Testament prohibitions and denunciations don't mean what they say and can all be situationally explained.

"The practice of homosexuality is not an unpardonable sin. I believe that Paul before his conversion was a greater sinner than any homosexual I have known or worked with. He could become the greatest defender of the faith; former practising homosexuals can also become great Christian leaders.

"Some realities we need to review:

"— Traditionally, many conservative Christians, together with much of society, have failed to distinguish between homosexual people and homosexuality. While we rightly condemn sin, we have no mandate to reject any people.

"— Traditionally, many conservative Christians have failed to distinguish between homosexual orientation and the practice of homosexuality. It is the latter which the Bible condemns.

"— Traditionally, many conservative Christians have singled out certain sexual sins for more severe denunciation than other gross evil such as greed and avarice. The Bible speaks just as forcefully and clearly about the latter.

"— Traditionally, many conservative Christians have failed to show love to homosexuals. Jesus loves homosexuals, even practising homosexuals, and so should we."

Read this too

The John Knox Christian School in Brampton, Ont., has been in the news lately. But in the midst of tension the work continues. The following quote is not from the church press. It is taken from a piece in JKCS newsletter and was written by a father who came to us from the outside. For nine years he had his children in the Christian school.

"My last child is graduating this year. Our two children went to JKCS for the past nine years. We felt they were in good hands and were glad to know that they would grow up hearing and seeing on a daily basis the love of God and Christ and be encouraged to get to know him personally. There is much good that could be said about JKCS, the staff, the curriculum. But today I want to take a few moments to express my gratitude to

those who made it all possible.

"I admire the sense of community the parents, grandparents and other members of the church communities have shown in their support of this school. If it had not been for them, my children would not have been able to get the Christian education they received through JKCS.

"I am not of Dutch descent, but through God's guidance, 10 years ago I became a member of the Christian Reformed Church.

At that time I remember asking myself many questions concerning the way these people obeyed God. Why would newcomers to a new country sacrifice so much to establish their own schools while all along they could have had a free education for their children?

"I am not a good historian, but today I think I have some answers to these questions. I believe that God instilled in them the foresight and the wis-

dom to establish Christian schools. Had it not been done at that time, today it might be too late. God knew what he was doing and he used these faithful believers to establish JKCS and other Christian schools. Their determination, struggles and sacrifices must have been a witness to the people of this land."

Jacob Kuntz is a CRC pastor who lives in Brampton, Ont., where he works as chaplain in Holland Christian Homes.

What role should small groups play in the church?

Dear Adrian,

We began talking about the church last time, so I thought I would continue some thoughts and questions I have about how we continue to live in it.

Within the last several years there has been, I think, a major shift in emphasis from preaching/teaching/learning in worship and midweek meetings to an approach which tries to be more sensitive to the various needs of the people in the pew. There is more emphasis on interaction

amples of doing that, and our worship services typically haven't allowed for it.

And yet I wonder. I confess that I have been up to now an observer of this change, not a participant. Part of that is my own personality: I am simply not by nature a "groupie" person. I sometimes jokingly offer to start a group for introverts that would promise never to meet. My unwillingness also was partly because of the counselling work I was doing. The last thing I felt I needed from

My spiritual and emotional needs are often profoundly met by a well-crafted expository sermon. But we know how important a functioning and supportive community is for growth and healing.

and discussion. There is a push toward the formation of cell groups. The Bible is studied often using the so-called inductive method, in which the emphasis is not first of all on what the Bible says, but on what it says to me at this moment in my situation. The groups as I hear about them form close and supportive bonds, praying with each other, being in some ways accountable to each other.

Much of this is good, I think. In the past we may have been guilty of theorizing and theologizing that did not serve the spiritual and emotional needs of people in the congregation. Speaking for myself, though, my spiritual and emotional needs are often profoundly met by a well-crafted expository sermon.

But we know how important a functioning and supportive community is for growth and healing. The Bible tells us that. Literature in the field of counselling tells us that. Alcoholics Anonymous is the forerunner of all kinds of support groups, and because of its group emphasis it is still the most effective tool for a person fighting alcoholism. Hillary Rodham Clinton reminds us that *It Takes A Village* to raise a child. And there comes a time in the lives of all the saints that we need to put expression to what the Lord has done for us. We haven't been stellar ex-

the church was another couple of hours in which people shared their burdens and needed to be listened to.

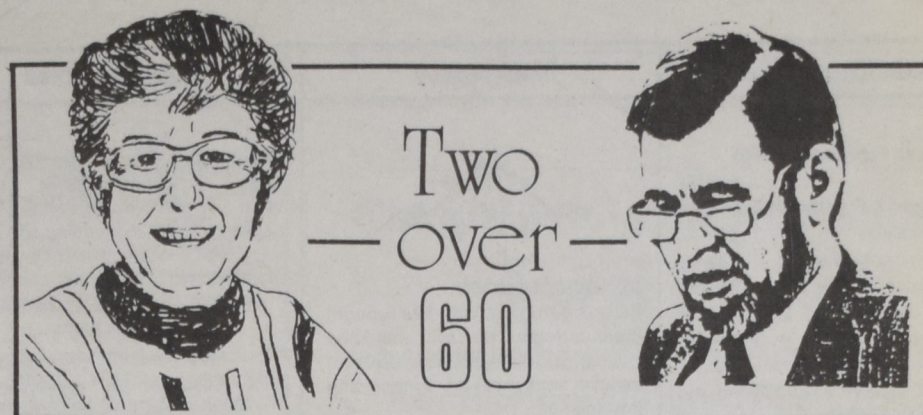
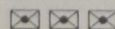
But now I'm retired, and my congregation is really putting the screws to us to join cell groups, some of which would meet on Sunday evening in place of the evening service as we know it.

I can agree with all the arguments for it. We have many new members from other countries who need more personal attention than the council and pastor could ever give. Many of them have spiritual riches from their own traditions and experience to share with us that we would never otherwise know about. Too many of our "old" members have been voting with their feet on the evening service for years, and given the busyness of life in Toronto in 1996, Sunday evening seems the best time for this kind of activity. And groups, like vegetables, are good for you.

So this month I will have to make a decision. I will probably, though I confess somewhat reluctantly, join a group.

What's your experience?

Cordially,
Mary



Mary VanderVennen

Adrian Peetoom

Dear Mary,

I'll get right to the point. What is my experience with small groups? Mixed.

During the last 10 years of my career I attended some five to 10 educational conferences each year. Usually the best sessions were small group meetings on a topic, perhaps every morning and afternoon, some five or six sessions. Usually the rules were simple: everyone had to speak and no one could dominate. What made groups tick was the sharing of personal professional stories, which often included a recalling of both splendid and devastating personal school experiences, some reaching back to the very first school day (I have such a story of my own, a positive one, bless you, Juf-frouw Dissel). Often no one wanted the group to disband at the end.

My only sustained church small-group experience occurred during our five-year membership in Grace CRC in Chatham, Ont. Once a month after the evening service adult members were asked to meet in small groups of about a dozen to discuss a topic linked to an annual theme. Not all members joined in, and not all groups were equally successful.

Johanna and I always enjoyed our groups. Interestingly, the topic at hand often received short shrift, and the prepared questions often seemed silly. What made our groups tick (or so my memory tells me) was the willingness of participants to be personal in their opinions and views. Dialogue died when people looked for the answer, or were afraid to speak what they really felt, for when dead orthodoxy is to be the topic, you can't have effective discussions. But when you are willing to share parts of your own faith story, listeners' eyes light up, backs straighten and everyone is surprised when it's high time to go home. It happened often

enough in Chatham to remain memorable. It has influenced my own personal work since.

From both experiences I draw these lessons for a church which decides to push for small group experiences:

- * groups should have no more than six members;
- * husbands and wives should probably join different groups;
- * the agenda (whatever the "topic") should be the sharing of faith stories: everyone talks and no one dominates;
- * once a month is not enough.

And from that I also draw this question. How does a group grow beyond the sum of individual wisdom? Or: How do we get from our group to the Body of Christ? It's difficult, particularly when few members of the group read much, know church history or even the Scriptures. For there's something very peculiar about the nature of Christian faith stories: they must link to tradition, all the way back to Jesus, all the way back to Creation; and they must be drenched in Scripture. That requires the discipline of real and ongoing learning by all members of the group.

I'm not saying that each member of the group should be able to make the links clear in words. I am saying that if those three elements do not pop up regularly, the group experience will probably remain mere milk for young children. Then, I'm afraid, pop psychology will dominate the group. And the church won't mature.

We need to know that we've come from somewhere and are going somewhere, that we are on a journey, and that as we were guided when we were young, we must now guide the younger ones. But we live in an age of the church "dumbing down," to quote Marva Dawn's recent book. So the question is: How can we get groups to become a "challenge up"? My Chatham experience did not point to a solution, however good it was for what it was.

I wish you *bon voyage* this fall. Perhaps we can come back to this topic some other time. Our own congregation is also making moves in the same direction.

Regards,
Adrian



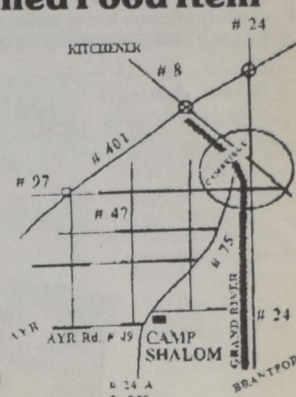
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If you wish a photo included, send us the original. d) <i>Christian Courier</i> will not be responsible for any errors due to handwritten or phoned-in advertisements. e) The rate shown above for classifieds covers any length up to five column inches. <i>Christian Courier</i> reserves the right to charge for additional column inches at the rate of \$15.00 per column inch (GST incl.). NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS We offer a one-year subscription for only \$25.00 (GST incl.) to the couples whose wedding is announced in the <i>Christian Courier</i> and to the parents of the child whose birth announcement appears in our paper. To facilitate matters, we encourage those who request the wedding or birth announcement to enclose \$25.00 and the couple's correct address. Christian Courier 4-261 Martindale Rd. St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1 Phone: (905) 682-8311 Fax: (905) 682-8313	 HUININK/DEGROOT: Believing that the Lord has brought them together we, Bill and Miep Huinink and Henk and Ann DeGroot joyfully announce the forthcoming marriage of DANIEL WILLIAM HUININK and IRENE SANDRA DEGROOT This celebration of love will take place, D.V., Saturday, Sept. 14, 1996, at 2 p.m., in Mt. Hamilton Chr. Ref. Church, Hamilton, Ont. Rev. J. Van Weelden will officiate. Dan and Irene's future address is: 430 First Road West, Apt. # 2, Stoney Creek, ON L8J 1X5 Birthdays ZONDERVAN: 1916 September 17 1996 With praise and thanksgiving to God we wish to announce the 80th birthday of our dear mother and grandmother JANNY ZONDERVAN (nee BYLSMA) We thank God for His faithfulness to Mom in the past and pray that He will continue to bless and uphold her. Our love and congratulations! Charley & Anne Zondervan Jason & Debbie, Karen & Steve, Adam, Laura Marilyn & George Buesink Jennifer, Christa, Leanne & Tim, Charlene, Geordie Fran & Bill Jongejan Jeremy, Alison & Cory, Caroline & Eugene, Julie, Rick, Rebecca We hope to celebrate together as family and friends on Saturday, Sept. 21, 1996, with an open house from 2-4 p.m., at the East Chr. Ref. Church hall in Strathroy, Ont. Best wishes only please! Home address: c/o Trillium Village, Apt. 12, 400 Dominion St., Strathroy, ON N7G 3G8	Winsum, Gr. Thunder Bay, Ont. 1946 September 26 1996 With joy and thanksgiving we celebrate the 50th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents HENRY and NELLIE HEEREMA (nee BEUKEMA) "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps.119:105). We thank God for His faithfulness to you in the past and pray that He will continue to bless and uphold you in the years to come. Congratulations Mom and Dad, Oma and Opa, we love you! Children and grandchildren: Huck Heerema (deceased) Frank & Barbara Agostino Sabrina Heerema, Ray Agostino Jerry & Pam Heerema Angela, Tim, Darryl Fred Heerema Peter & Millie Heerema Paul & Sandra, Kevin, Mark, Mike Martin & Helen Heerema Don & Kathy Heerema Don, Adrian Come and celebrate with us at an open house to be held on Saturday, Sept. 28, 1996, D.V., from 2-4 p.m., at the Murillo Town Hall, Murillo, Ont. Bring along your best wishes only please. Home address: 164 Shirley Road, R.R. 12, Thunder Bay, ON P7B 5E3 Phone: (807) 767-1292 Maple Ridge, B.C. Beachville, Ont. 1971 September 24 1996 With gratitude to our heavenly Father for His provision and faithfulness we announce the 25th wedding anniversary of our parents NICO and ALICE JUKEMA We pray that He will continue to uphold you and bless your marriage with many more years. With love from your children: Duane & Jennifer (girlfriend) Derek Cindy Friends and relatives are invited to celebrate with us at an open house to be held at Emmanuel Chr. Ref. Church, 170 Clarke St. N., Woodstock, Ont., on Sept. 28, 1996, from 2-4 p.m. Address: R.R. #1, Beachville, ON N0J 1A0	1956 September 21 1996 Drayton, Ont. With joy and thanksgiving to the Lord, we wish to announce the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents HILBERT and DINY RUMPH (nee DROST) May the Lord bless them and keep them in His care for years to come. With love from their children and grandchildren: Alfred — Drayton, Ont. Jacqueline & Ron Vanderwees — Winnipeg, Man. Jared, Michael, Steven Bernice & Gerard Hoftyzer — Londesborough, Ont. Darryl, Michelle, Krista, Robert Nancy — London, Ont. Arnold — Drayton, Ont. An open house will be held, D.V., on Saturday, Sept. 21, 1996, from 2-4 p.m., in the Fellowship hall of the Drayton Chr. Ref. Church, Drayton, Ont. Best wishes only please. Address: 15 Bonniewood Drive, Drayton, ON N0G 1P0 1946 September 12 1996 "Thy Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path" (Ps.119:105). JOHN and TINA VISSER (nee VAN DER BIJ) For 50 years the Lord has led and guided our parents in His ways. With gratitude and thankfulness to God we hope to celebrate these 50 years of blessing with them. John & Frieda Visser — Winnipeg, Man. Teena Visser — Hamilton, Ont. Annie Venema — Winnipeg, Man. Leo & Carla Visser — Winnipeg, Man. Thea & Sandy Siepman — Winnipeg, Man. George & Gail Visser — Elmhurst, Ill. Harold & Marg Visser — Winfield, Ill. Peter & Bev Visser — Villa Park, Ill. We, their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren wish them God's richest blessings. HAPPY 50th ANNIVERSARY! Address: 5813 Henderson Hwy., Box 17, Group 354, R.R. #3, Winnipeg, MB R3C 2E7	It pleased the Lord to take to heaven on Aug. 12, 1996, our dear husband, father, grandfather, pake and great-grandfather HARVEY HAANSTRA in his 75th year. Beloved husband of Joyce Haanstra (VanderWal). Dear father, grandfather, pake and great-grandfather of: Effie & Bert Struyk — Gowanstown Pat & Sheila (Robert), Lily & Bruce, Cathy, Michael, Paul & Julie John & Debbie Haanstra — Caistor Centre Marsha, Ron, Daryl, Adrian, Steven, Leanne, Karen, Daniel Martha & Wayne VanderWier — Smithville Jolene, Barbara, Ivan, Calvin & Dianne Liz & Jeremy Van Duyvendyk — Seoul, Korea Stephanie, Nico, Kristi Jerry & Jane Haanstra — Vinemount Jennifer, Jason, Janine, Janelle, Janice Joyce Haanstra — Paris Harvey & Hilda Haanstra — Hagersville Harvey Jr., Heather, Justin Anita & John Kuipery — St. Catharines Kevin, Richard, Lisa, Stacey Nelly & Jim DeKlerk — Dunnville Christopher, Tammy, Lindsey, Allen, Derrick, Robyn Survived by one brother and one sister in the Netherlands. Our comfort comes from Psalm 23:4. Funeral service was held in Bethel Chr. Ref. Church in Dunnville, Ont., Rev. R. Stienstra officiated. Correspondence address: Mrs. J. Haanstra, R.R. 9, Dunnville, ON N1A 2W8 Psalm 121 It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of our dear wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother ANNA MARIA SCHINKEL (nee JONKER) Her husband of 66 years Willem Schinkel survives her. We celebrate her long life with the knowledge that she looked forward to eternity with trust and hope in God and we commend her to His care. Jack & Rose Schinkel — Renfrew, Ont. Bob & Eva Schinkel — London, Ont. Tina & William Doelman — Ottawa, Ont. Gerda Huibers — Brockville, Ont. Jerry & Manja Schinkel — Pierrefonds, Que. Mary Anne & Henry Venema — Cobden, Ont. Audrey & Cor Schijff — Navan, Ont. Bill & Dawn Schinkel — White Lake, Ont. David & Linda Schinkel — Brockville, Ont. and 24 grandchildren and 32 great-grandchildren. Correspondence address: R.R. 3, Cobden, ON K0J 1K0
Church News	Vacations	Personal	Vacations	
Christian Reformed Church Calls extended: — to Calvary, Ottawa, Rev. Nicolaas Cornelisse of Maranatha, Edmonton. Interested in placing an ad? Get in touch with us for details.	BERGENTHEIM TE HUUR VOOR VAKANTIE: Moderne gemeubileerde woning (modern furnished home) — per week of per maand — in Bergen-theim, Overijssel (ongeveer 12 km van Ommen). Voor volledige informatie bel of schrijf naar: J. Snijders 651-4 Ave. E. Brooks, AB T1R 0H4 Phone: (403) 362-4052 or (403) 362-2653	ONE TO ANOTHER Christian companion magazine. Hundreds of readers Canada-wide. Single issue \$5. Write to: #302, 1502-2nd Ave. S. Lethbridge, AB T1J 4A2	GOING TO HOLLAND FOR VACATION? Why not rent a VACATION APARTMENT and visit family and sight-see at your leisure. CENTRALLY LOCATED near APELDOORN. year-round accommodations. FOR BROCHURE OR MORE INFORMATION CALL Harold or Nellie at (905) 985-7891 or fax us at (905) 985-0195.	

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Attention McMaster Students! 3-Bedr. furnished apartment. Suitable for 2 or 3 females. With security, close to bus, 15 min. from campus. Must be Christian, non-smoker. Have references ready regarding cleanliness and carefulness; even from mother will do. Call (905) 525-8268	Job Opportunities Social Service Work - Mutual Support Systems, a parent model network of rural group homes in the Niagara Peninsula for children experiencing emotional and behavioral difficulties, invites applications for the position of Child Care Worker. The responsibilities of this live-in position include involvement in educational programming, scheduling daily routines, and child supervision, within a family structured environment. Position includes salary and benefits package. Please submit resume to Personnel Manager, Mutual Support Systems, P.O.Box 397, Fenwick, ON L0S 1C0 or call (905) 892-4332.	Real Estate ADA REALTY LTD. 2011-137 Ave., Suite 404 Edmonton, AB T5A 4W2 (403) 473-8149 Sid Vandermeulen Contact us first when you think of moving to Edmonton and district. <i>Het vertrouwde adres.</i>		
For rent: Apartments. Redeemer College may have available some furnished 2- and 4-bedroom apartments from September 1996 - August 15, 1997. Can be rented per day, week or month at very reasonable rates. No lease required. Please call (905) 648-2131 ext. #260 or #290.				
Personal Widow, 72 years old, likes companion her age or to 75 years old. Writing OK. Please write to File #2650, c/o Christian Courier, 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1. Attractive, full-figured, active 55-year-old seeking Christian companion for long-term relationship, friendship first. Call Barbara at (905) 774-6147. Active single 40-year-old blonde, loves sports and church activities, seeking male with similar age and interests. Call Eve at (905) 774-4356. Christian widow in 60s would like to correspond with Christian man, mid-60s to early 70s. Likes reading, good music, cozy home life. Dislikes loneliness. Please write to: File #2653, c/o Christian Courier, 4-261 Martindale Rd. St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1	Miscellaneous  The Living Word Sermons for reading services. Contact: R. Vander Ploeg Sec./Treas. 210 Clarke St. N. Woodstock, ON N4S 7M7 Phone: (519) 539-2117 For Sale  THE MUSIC GROUP Willem Van Suydam General Manager 5205 Harvester Rd., Unit 2, Burlington, ON L7L 6B5 1-800-376-7199		Calendar of Events Please submit only brief items. Placement is subject to space availability. Lengthy, multiple-event announcements will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit the material and to charge a nominal, per issue fee per item inserted. Sept. 8 Welcome service for Waterloo-area students (Huron Campus Ministry), 10:30 a.m., Waterloo CRC, 209 Bearinger Rd., Waterloo, Ont. Info.: (519) 886-1474. (#) Sept. 8 University of Guelph special student services at 10 a.m. in both New Life CRC (400 Victoria N.) and First CRC (287 Water St.), Guelph, Ont. All students, parents and friends are invited to a barbecue at 12 noon at First CRC. Info.: (519) 824-4120, ext.2392. (#) Sept. 14 39th Annual Ontario CRC School Convention, Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ont. Info.: Ria Heeringa, phone (905) 643-4959, fax (905) 643-6827. Sept. 14 LDCSS Alumni Picnic, 2-6 p.m. (rain or shine) at the school, London, Ont. Info.: (519) 455-4360 or fax: (519) 455-4364 (#) Sept. 21 Annual "Camp Shalom Fall Fair," 10 a.m.-4 p.m., R.R.4, Cambridge, Ont. Admission: canned goods for the local food bank. Lots to do for young and old, and great food! Watch for ad. For info. call John and Irene at (905) 689-8062 (#). Sept. 21 Ashley Cleveland, 1996 Grammy award winner, in concert, 8 p.m., Jubilee Fellowship CRC, 13 Wilholme Dr., St.Catharines, Ont. With guitarist Kenny Greenberg. Doors open at 7 p.m. For tickets call Judi at (905) 892-6434. Sept. 25 Celebration and open house in honor of the retirement of Rev. and Mrs. Peter and Anne De Bruyne, 7:30 p.m., Mountainview CRC, Grimsby, Ont. Rev. De Bruyne will preach his farewell sermon at 9:30 a.m., on Sunday, Sept. 29, at Shalom Manor, Grimsby, Ont. (#) Sept. 28 "Praise and Worship Conference" with Grace and Colleen, First CRC, 310 Kingscourt Ave., Kingston, Ont. Info.: (613) 542-8350 or 389-5050. Sept. 29 Youth service featuring the Christian contemporary rockband "His Band," 6:30 p.m., First CRC, 310 Kingscourt Ave., Kingston, Ont. Everyone welcome! Info.: (613) 389-4185. Oct. 3 Open house and welcome for Rev. and Mrs. George and Frieda Van Arragon, 2:45 p.m., Shalom Manor, Grimsby, Ont. Rev. Van Arragon will be installed as Chaplain at 9:30 a.m., on Sunday, Oct. 6, at Shalom Manor, Grimsby, Ont. Oct. 6 Dutch worship service led by Rev. Jerry J. Hoytema, 3 p.m., CRC, Ancaster, Ont. Oct. 26 Christian Rainbows Fellowship-sponsored special meeting, 10 a.m., Ingersoll, Ont. Speaker: Mr. W.J. MacPhee, publisher of <i>Schizophrenia Digest</i> Pre-reg. required \$7.00. Info.: (905) 639-1075 or (519) 631-0307. Oct.30-Nov.2 "Free to Serve," celebrations will be held Oct. 30: Jubilee Auditorium, Edmonton, Alta., and Nov. 2: Redeemer College Auditorium, Ancaster, Ont. For details, see ad in C.C., July 5/96. (#) Nov. 1 "Christian Festival Concert," by the choirs and brass of the Ontario Chr. Music Assembly, directed by Leendert Kooij. At 8 p.m., Roy Thomson Hall, Toronto, Ont. Also featuring Andre Knevel and Sander Van Marion (organ and piano) and Marjorie Ginczinger, soprano. A truly exciting event! Tickets/info.: (416) 636-9779 (#). Nov. 10 Dutch worship service led by Rev. Riemer Praamsma, 3 p.m., CRC, Ancaster, Ont. Dec. 15 Dutch worship service led by Rev. Peter Van Egmond, 3 p.m., CRC, Ancaster, Ont.	
Miscellaneous Mature, honest young family earnestly seeking arrangement to house-sit for one year, starting January 1997, in the Hamilton-Burlington area. Call (905) 387-1345.				

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- Sept. 28** "Praise and Worship Conference" with Grace and Colleen, First CRC, 310 Kingscourt Ave., Kingston, Ont. Info.: (613) 542-8350 or 389-5050.
- Sept. 29** Youth service featuring the Christian contemporary rockband "His Band," 6:30 p.m., First CRC, 310 Kingscourt Ave., Kingston, Ont. Everyone welcome! Info.: (613) 389-4185.
- Oct. 3** Open house and welcome for Rev. and Mrs. George and Frieda Van Arragon, 2:45 p.m., Shalom Manor, Grimsby, Ont. Rev. Van Arragon will be installed as Chaplain at 9:30 a.m., on Sunday, Oct. 6, at Shalom Manor, Grimsby, Ont.
- Oct. 6** Dutch worship service led by Rev. Jerry J. Hoytema, 3 p.m., CRC, Ancaster, Ont.
- Oct. 26** Christian Rainbows Fellowship-sponsored special meeting, 10 a.m., Ingersoll, Ont. Speaker: Mr. W.J. MacPhee, publisher of *Schizophrenia Digest* Pre-reg. required \$7.00. Info.: (905) 639-1075 or (519) 631-0307.
- Oct.30-Nov.2** "Free to Serve," celebrations will be held **Oct. 30:** Jubilee Auditorium, Edmonton, Alta., and **Nov. 2:** Redeemer College Auditorium, Ancaster, Ont. For details, see ad in C.C., July 5/96. (#)
- Nov. 1** "Christian Festival Concert," by the choirs and brass of the Ontario Chr. Music Assembly, directed by Leendert Kooij. At 8 p.m., Roy Thomson Hall, Toronto, Ont. Also featuring Andre Knevel and Sander Van Marion (organ and piano) and Marjorie Ginczinger, soprano. A truly exciting event! Tickets/info.: (416) 636-9779 (#).
- Nov. 10** Dutch worship service led by Rev. Riemer Praamsma, 3 p.m., CRC, Ancaster, Ont.
- Dec. 15** Dutch worship service led by Rev. Peter Van Egmond, 3 p.m., CRC, Ancaster, Ont.

Classifieds

Events	Events	Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous
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Saddleback
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Southern B.C.
Sunday, October 27
Lynden Public
High School

Northern Alberta
Wednesday,
October 30
Northern Alberta
Jubilee Auditorium

Southern Ontario
Saturday, November 2
Redeemer College
Auditorium

West Michigan
Wednesday,
November 6
Van Andel Arena

Great Plains
Friday, November 8
Saturday, November 9
B.J. Haan Auditorium,
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Events

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Dr. Polman will examine the text and tunes of hymns, and their current use in Christian worship. Dr. Polman is a hymnologist, an editorial committee member for four published hymnals, and a professor of music at Redeemer College. **Six Monday evenings, 6:30-9:00**; Sept. 23, 30, Oct. 7, 21, Nov. 4, 11.

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Miscellaneous

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Hutterite colony is fascinating blend of tradition and modernity



I have other sheep, too, in another fold, I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice; and there will be one flock with one shepherd (Luke 10:16, Living Bible).

Hilda J. Born

In July we drove to Winnipeg for a conference. While there we noticed an ad for a bus tour to a traditional Hutterite colony. Pricked by curiosity, we paid our \$20 fare.

Our bus wasn't air-conditioned, but we were accompanied by an excellent tour guide. William Schroeder, a noted Mennonite historian, supplied us with maps and background information.

As we approached Suncrest colony near Saint Pierre, Man., we could see rows of trees, clusters of white houses and barns, and vast flocks of poultry in their outdoor pens.

A stocky Mr. D. greeted us cheerfully and showed us around. He told us that 104 residents belonging to 22 families live in this colony. They have family homes but eat communally.

The adults, meaning anyone over 15, eat in the dining hall, segregated by gender. (There's a separate children's eating area.) Men are served the food at their tables, while the women, on the opposite side of the room, eat buffet style.

"The two colony heads, or leading ministers, eat in the privacy of their own homes,"

our guide told us.

"There is good supervision and regular rotation of duties within the colony," the guide said. Outside we saw good vehicles and modern machinery.

The men and boys wore high-buttoned shirts and black pants held up by suspenders. Blond, barefoot boys ran around hatless, but the rest of the males wore black felt or straw hats.

The girls wore carefully pleated bonnets. Teenaged girls and women tied a black triangle kerchief over this bonnet that covers most of their rolled-back hair.

A choice to leave

Our host proudly showed us his classroom and cited his teaching credentials. He was enthusiastic about education offered at the colony. His linguistic skills in several Swiss-German dialects, as well as fluent English, were undeniable.

Classroom instruction ranges from Kindergarten to Grade 9. High school is now also available by teleconferencing.

At age 18, members of the colony are given the freedom to choose: to stay and assume regular responsibilities, or leave to live as the rest of society. This teacher told us that, regrettably from his point of view, two of his daughters chose the latter. One left to study law near Ottawa, the other to move into an off-colony relationship.

Because families are often large, many Hutterites are re-

lated. Marriage partners are hard to find and Hutterites don't allow cousins to marry. That's why the participants in our tour group were heartily invited to join the colony. The colony teaches an evangelical gospel and wants an infusion of new blood-lines.

When the group grows too large, perhaps more than 125 people, it appraises its present assets. Meanwhile the group looks for land to launch a new colony.

Everything was neat and orderly, but on this very hot day a slight hog smell hung in the air. A sizable group of children sat in the shade playing, supervised by teenagers.

The only woman in sight was an elderly kitchen supervisor who slipped out the backdoor as soon as she'd seen the brightly dressed dishwashing girl finish her job. I caught her just in time to ask permission to take her picture. "You must ask the man," she replied, pointing to our leader. She disappeared before I could ask more questions. Mr. D. did not object. We then walked on, to a building site which will be the new laundry area requested by the women.

For a first time visitor the setting seemed almost idyllic. But, for some restless teenagers the colony's closeness is obviously too constraining.

Hilda Born lives in Abbotsford, B.C.

Special Meeting

Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada

The Council of **Covenant Christian Reformed Church, Winnipeg, Man.**, is calling delegates of the 12-member classes to an extraordinary meeting of the **Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada** on **November 11 and 12, 1996, in Winnipeg**, for the purpose of considering the future structure of the ministries of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada. Council asks the churches to pray in preparation for this direction-setting meeting.

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News

'Just for once' turns into 50 years for organist



Wilma Schraa at the organ

Marian Van Til

EDMONTON — In 1946, when 15-year-old Wilma Schraa was asked to fill in for the

organist of her Reformed Church in Schraard, the Netherlands, she never dreamed she'd still be playing for services 50

years later, and on the other side of the world.

The teen-aged Schraa's response to the request to play in place of the regular organist had been, "Well, just for once."

Schraa, who has long since moved to Canada, has many stories she can tell about her now five-decade-long experience as a church organist. Such as the Easter morning in Schraard in the days before electric organ blowers, when Schraa literally pulled out all the stops for a rousing prelude on the hymn whose text begins: *Wees gegroet, gij eersteling der dagen, morgen der verrijzenis, bij wiens licht de macht der hel verslagen en de dood vernietigd is.* ("We greet you, first of all days, morning of the resurrection, by whose light the power of hell is defeated and death is destroyed.")

The more stops you use, the more wind the organ needs. As Schraa finished her prelude,

Abe, who manually pumped the bellows, came around to the keyboard sweating and out of breath. "Can you please take it a bit easier?" he chided, panting, "I don't want to die of a heart attack yet!"

After Wilma married Raymond Schraa she played in churches in Offingawier and Goenga. Next came the Schraas move to Edmonton, where Wilma played at Second Christian Reformed Church, followed by Ottewell CRC where she still currently contributes to services.

Schraa also plays regularly at services at an Edmonton hospital and frequently at senior citizens' and nursing homes. When away on vacation, visiting other churches, she has also had opportunities to fill in for absent organists.

Wilma Schraa feels she has been richly blessed to be able to share God's gift of music with countless people over so many years. And she's still sharing.

Dutch group erects monument to Father Lacombe

John Jager

LACOMBE, Alta. — On July 27, 1996, Lacombe, Alta., celebrated its 100th birthday. The town is named after Father Lacombe, an early Catholic missionary and pioneer who went west in 1852. He worked hard among the Metis and the Indians under very difficult conditions: harsh, cold winters, and sickness and hunger while travelling by boat, on snow shoes or horseback. Lacombe gained the respect of those he ministered to; he was called "the man with a good heart" by the Blackfoot Indians and "the noble soul" by the Cree.

A Mr. Van Horne of the national railway company appreciated Lacombe's help in settling disputes between Indians and railway workers. In fact, the two became friends. It was Van Horne who decided to rename Siding #12, after the priest honoring Lacombe for his mediation efforts.

To celebrate the town of Lacombe's 100th anniversary The Dutch Heritage Community of Lacombe has presented the town with a monument of Father Lacombe. The monument is a concrete pillar with a 18" by 24"

sculpted bronze plaque on each side. The plaques were sculpted by a local artist and depict a portrait of Father Lacombe, his departure from St. Boniface to Edmonton, his work among the Metis and the Indians. Each plaque also contains three lines of information and historical data.

Excellent exposure at busiest intersection

The pillar enjoys excellent exposure on the corner of the busiest intersection in town. The unveiling took place on the day of the anniversary after a celebratory parade. A good crowd was present, including provincial and local government representatives and Paul Harnois, the grandson of father Lacombe's sister.

The town's appreciation for this monument has been great. It is not only a tourist attraction but it reflects on the work of the church in days gone by. Some have commented that it was nice to see the willingness of the Dutch Heritage Community, which is 95 per cent Calvinist, to erect a monument honoring a Roman Catholic missionary.



Ria and John Jager in front of the Lacombe monument

News Digest

Tutu escapes kidnapping

BLOEMFONTEIN, South Africa (EP) — A businessperson reportedly told police he planned to kidnap Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu, chair of the government-appointed Truth and Reconciliation Commission investigating atrocities committed during the apartheid era in South Africa. The man reportedly carried a gun past a metal detector at a commission hearing. When confronted, he said he planned to kidnap Tutu to force the commission to hear his grievances, though according to Ecumenical News International another report said he planned to kill Tutu.

Church hosts clergy abuse hotline

VIENNA, Austria (EP) — Victims of clergy sexual abuse in Austria have a special telephone hotline to call for counselling and legal advice. The line is financed by the Catholic Church, but run by independent psychiatrists and psychotherapists. A spokesperson said that one in four girls and one in 10 boys in Austria is sexually molested, and noted that some of that abuse takes place in church institutions. Awareness of the issue was raised last year when students accused an archbishop of molestation.

No absolution by computer

BONN, Germany (EP) — A computer program that lets users confess their sins and receive appropriate penance was condemned by Germany's Roman Catholic Church, which said, "You cannot have sins forgiven by the push of a button."

The "Confession by Computer" CD-ROM lets users pick from a list of 200 pre-programmed sins, or enter their own if they've been particularly creative. The program searches its database for an appropriate penance, displays the words to "Our Father" or "Hail Mary" on the screen, then gives instructions for contacting a pastor in the Internet.